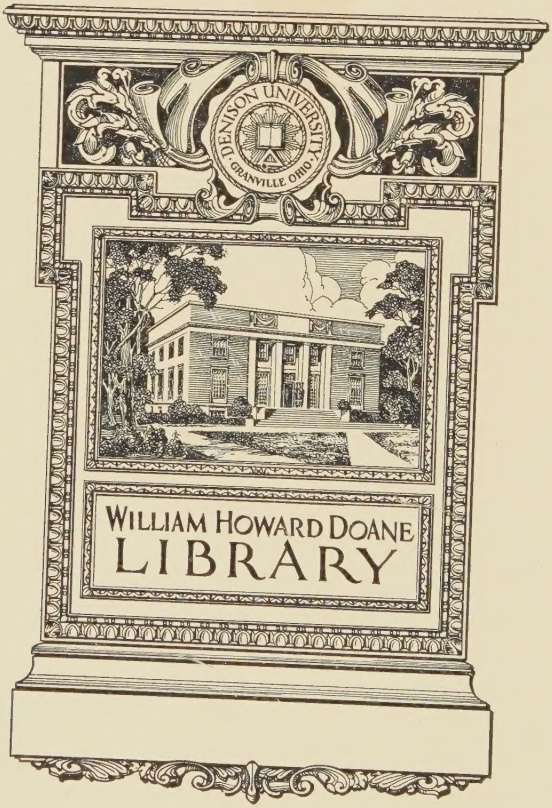
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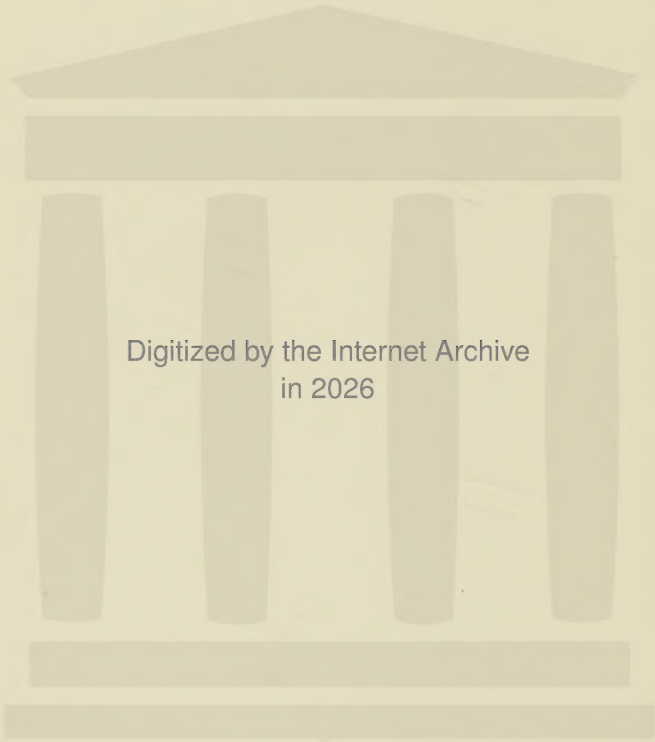
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A HISTORY OF FRANCE

VOL. II

REIGN OF CHARLES VIII

1493–1498

A

HISTORY OF

FRANCE

FROM THE DEATH OF

LOUIS XI

BY

JOHN S. C. BRIDGE

VOLUME II

REIGN OF CHARLES VIII

1493–1498

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
1924

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IX

ITALY AND THE FRENCH CLAIMS

The personal rule of Charles VIII dates from the retirement of Anne de Beaujeu, and the time has now come when we must make a closer acquaintance with the young man who had lightly assumed a grave responsibility. Favoured neither by nature nor by circumstance, frail of constitution, and feeble in mind, His Most Christian Majesty was not a figure to inspire respect, and to make an intimate study of his character is to oscillate between a pity which seems at times to be undeserved and a contempt which appears now and then to be unjust. After the gift of an eldest child as resolute, indomitable, and imperious as himself, heredity had played upon Louis XI a strange prank in sending to his nursery an infirm and crippled girl and then a sickly and mis-shapen boy. Charles was short of stature, with a big head set awkwardly upon a small and flabby neck; a well-covered breast and back and a fleshy paunch dwindled away abruptly into long, spindly legs; the eyes were large and protuberant; a great hooked nose surmounted coarse lips; and the chin was covered only in part by a thin reddish beard. Regarding him with an artist's eye, Mantegna, the painter, thought Charles positively deformed; it gave him the nightmare, he told a correspondent, to call to mind the small hunchback with his bulging eyes, large beaked nose, and scraggy hair.[1] Contarini, the Venetian ambassador, who came to congratulate him upon his marriage, gave a less forcible expression to his feelings, but in common with all his country-

[1] Portoveneri, 'Memoriale', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. vi, part ii, p. 288, note. Compare Pontanus, *De Fortuna*, Lib. II, Cap. 34, as cited by Cesare Cantù, 'Gli Sforza e Carlo VIII', in *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series II, vol. v: 'Erat in Carlo foeda quaedam oris, corporis vero totius deformis effigies'; also Peter Martyr, *Opus Epistolarum* (edit. of 1670), p. 110; 'Carolus Rex, pygmaeo brevior, animo typheo vel Polyphemeo grandior.'

men, aflame with Renaissance ardour and athirst for beauty, he experienced something of the same feeling of physical repulsion in the presence of the ill-favoured monarch. 'His Majesty the King of France', he wrote,[1] 'is twenty-two years old, small and ill-formed in person, with an ugly face, large lustreless eyes, which seem to be short-sighted, an enormous aquiline nose, and thick lips, which are continually parted; he stutters, and has a nervous twitching of the hands which is unpleasant to watch. In my opinion—it may well be wrong—he is not of much account either physically or mentally; however, he is generally well spoken of in Paris as being a good hand at tennis, hunting, and tilting—pursuits to which, whether for good or ill, he devotes much time. He is praised also in that he now desires himself to debate and decide questions which in the past he would leave to certain members of his Secret Council, and it is said that in this respect he acquits himself quite creditably.'

A health which demanded incessant care had left small opportunity for any scheme of education to correct innate defects of mind and character. Charles had spent his boyhood at Amboise in a seclusion unbroken by that juvenile experience of public life through which Princes are accustomed to serve their apprenticeship to the throne; and he had been kept so close that there were some who doubted if his presence in the castle was suspected by the inhabitants of the little town which nestled around its towers. Tradition ascribes the régime to the suspicious malevolence of Louis XI, taught by the disloyalties of his own youth the potentialities for mischief of an heir-apparent: but tradition wrongs the King. The attitude of Louis towards his son was that of an over-anxious parent, trembling lest the gift for which he had longed and prayed should be snatched prematurely from his grasp. Solicitous about every detail of the frail child's health, he pestered his attendants with inquiries whether he was in good spirits and eating and sleeping well, whether he lay warm of nights, or grew over-heated at his play; and a frenzy of anxiety when Charles fell sick was succeeded upon his recovery

[1] Albèri, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Series I, vol. iv, pp. 15–16.

by a not less passionate frenzy of joy.[1] In his dread of injury to the delicate constitution Louis had directed that health should be the first and paramount consideration, to which all else—learning, social graces, athletic accomplishment—should be subordinated. With Latin he would not have the boy's mind troubled : all the classical lore required by the wearer of a crown was to understand the maxim, *Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare.* The learning appropriate to a king was a knowledge of his country's history and of the principles of government ; and accordingly in the intervals of healthful recreation Charles had been reared on French chronicles and on a collection of political, moral, and military precepts composed for his instruction. To ride abroad with his tutor, Étienne de Vesc, to try his hounds or his hawks, and to listen to romances of chivalry at his mother's knee had been the occupation and the pleasure of his youth.

In these conditions the fine promise of a prince which ten years before a Flemish deputation had thought to discern in the little Dauphin[2] had been balked of its fulfilment. The irregularity which formed the salient feature in Charles' physical structure had its counterpart in the lack of balance which characterized his mental and moral growth. Charles was neither totally foolish nor entirely ignorant ; and had he been the illiterate boor whom some writers portray, he could not have won, and still less amid unblushing infidelities could he have retained, the devoted and even passionate attachment of his intelligent and accomplished Queen. He liked reading, respected knowledge, and possessed a sufficient aesthetic sense to appreciate the marvels of Italian art and nature. But an ardent imagination, fed on an exciting diet of romance, was unrestrained by the sobering influence of sound instruction, knowledge of statecraft, or experience of affairs ; and a vein of idealist enthusiasm conspired with the generous impulses

[1] H. F. Delaborde, *L'Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*, pp. 154–5.

[2] 'C'est ung tres beau commencement de prince' (January 1483) : L. Brésin, *Chroniques de Flandre*, ed. Mannier, p. 25. Compare Claude de Seyssel, *Histoire singulière du Roy Loys XII*, p. 55, who thought him 'so far started upon the path of greatness and virtue as to be likely, had he lived, to become a model prince'.

of youth to conjure up before his untutored mind impracticable visions of conquest and renown. Formed without consideration, his chimerical projects were sometimes pursued without resolution, for there was an erratic impetuosity about his ambition that accorded with his incomplete intelligence and his wavering and inconsequent mind. Upon occasion, however, he could show the obstinacy of the obtuse, and the history of the Italian enterprise was to prove him capable of a tenacity of purpose long sustained against opposition and obstacles. Generally, in the affairs of everyday life, he lacked both resolution and application, changing his mind under the influence of his favourites, or wearying of the solid preparation essential to the success of his designs. There was in him much of the improvident kindliness which is loath to refuse a favour and of the weak amiability which hates to run counter to the wishes of a friend.[1] 'Charles' kindness sometimes amounted to weakness; he was so incapable of refusing that a Neapolitan, who followed him afterwards to France and has left us curious memoirs, jokingly told him one day that, had he been a woman, his tendency to please everybody would have gravely imperilled his chastity.'[2] A golden age was coming for those who should win his ear.

'The King', said Ludovic il Moro to a Venetian ambassador, 'is young, and of small capacity and indifferent judgement. His counsellors are divided into two sets: one is led by M. Philippe [de Bresse], whose followers are my enemies; the other is led by M. de Saint-Malo [Briçonnet] and M. de Beaucaire [de Vesc], and is opposed in every respect to the first. Neither cares a straw for the good of

[1] 'Le gentil roy Charles fut . . . si doulx et gracieulx, que l'on ne sceut oncques trouver homme à qui il dit une rude parolle': 'Recit de la Bataille de Fornoue', in Mlle Dupont's edition of the *Mémoires* of Commynes, vol. iii, p. 425; 'doulx, courtois et bening, liberal à ses serviteurs et amys, humain et gracieux à toutes gens': C. de Seyssel, *Histoire singulière du Roy Loys XII*, p. 55; 'Je croy que jamais à homme ne dist chose qui luy deust desplaire': Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 387; 'Jamais ne fust veu meilleur prince en France, si doux, si benin ny si libéral; si qu'oncques personne ne se despartit de sa présence qu'elle s'en allast esconduiste de chose qu'elle luy demandast, ny qu'il lui dict jamais mauvaise parolle; et c'est ainsi qu'il faut gaigner les gens': Brantôme, *Œuvres*, ed. L. Lalanne, vol. ii, p. 318.

[2] Delaborde, *L'Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*, p. 568.

the country, provided it can get the better of its rivals and secure the triumph of its own views. The real aim and object of all is the acquisition of money ;[1] they care for nothing else ; and they have no sense among them I have in my mind a picture of the King at Asti, with his counsellors around him. When some question came up for discussion, some would begin to gamble, others to eat, one to do one thing, one another. Some one would express an opinion, and the King would adopt it and dispatch orders in that sense : then somebody else would come and speak with him, and the orders would be revoked. Charles is consumed by pride and ambition, and respects nobody : sometimes, when we were sitting together, he would rise and go off to dinner, leaving me alone, as though I had been a dog. . . . Seeing his backwardness in the common cause, his forwardness in asking for money, and the rapacity of his courtiers, who give not a thought to what might be called administration, I said to him one day:—" Sire, if you wish me to give you money, I ought to know what has been done with that which you have already had, and what you purpose to do with that for which you now ask." As his officials would not let in the light on their peculations, I was not troubled with any further demands.'[2]

The astute ruler of Milan was a severe, and perhaps also a prejudiced, critic ; but equally unflattering accounts of Charles' capacities and methods were sent home by the envoys of Piero de' Medici, who brought to the French Court the lively Francophil sympathies of their city. One of them, Gentile Becchi, Bishop of Arezzo, thought him ambitious but incapable ; his interests seemed to be centred in hunting, hawking, hounds, and horses ; and ' of himself he is unfit to govern a great kingdom in such a time, being loath to lose any pleasure and prone to alter his mind at the instance of the last person with him, so that nothing is done '.[3] ' The King ', said the Bishop's colleague,

[1] King Ferrante of Naples likewise referred to Charles as ' governandose per altri, et per persona che per denari fanno onne cosa ' : Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, vol. ii, part ii, p. 278.

[2] Ludovic, as reported by Sebastian Badoer, 3rd December 1494 : Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, second edit., vol. v, p. 51.

[3] Letters of 28th September and October–November, 1493 : Canestrini

Francesco della Casa, 'is quite incapable of dealing by himself with serious business; indeed, I am ashamed to say how little he understands or interests himself in it. To secure you in his good books, and to maintain a good position at Court, I shall avail myself of every occasion that offers to keep on easy and familiar terms with him; but I must caution you not to run away with the idea that it will be beneficial to us to ingratiate ourselves with him, for every day he lets himself be drawn in a thousand different directions, and is led by any one who can gain his ear. Ordinary affairs of no great consequence are conducted in a haphazard manner productive of indescribable confusion, and were it not that matters of importance receive some consideration in the Council, I should predict inevitable disaster to the Government.' [1]

Della Casa went on to report upon the King's entourage, and to discuss the attitude of the leading courtiers towards the projects for an invasion of Naples which had occasioned his own mission. There were five lords, he said, who formed a committee for Italian affairs, to wit, Marshal d'Esquerdes, Jean de Baudricourt, Governor of Burgundy, Étienne de Vesc, Seneschal of Beaucaire, Philippe de Commynes, Seigneur d'Argenton, and Guillaume Briçonnet, Général des Finances of Languedoc. Apart from these five and from Anne de Beaujeu, there were few who understood the matter. Amongst the five, Briçonnet and de Vesc were the most influential. Briçonnet was 'an astute man, with a great reputation and influence with the King', but it was to be feared that he was no friend to Florence. 'The Seneschal is further advanced in the affection and intimacy of the King, and is more closely associated with every kind of business, than any seigneur in the Court, and in all that concerns Italy his word carries more weight than that of all the other lords put together. . . . He is wholly in Signor Ludovic's interest, and favours and honours the Prince of Salerno, upon whom he relies much in Italian affairs. The Seneschal is the source of all favours and honours, and,

et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane*, vol. i, pp. 329, 340.

[1] Francesco della Casa to Piero de' Medici, Paris, 28th June 1493: Canestrini et Desjardins, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

knowing that he can help or hurt us more than any other lord, I have striven, and daily endeavour, to win his favour. I think that he is not ill-disposed towards us; but we can expect no whole-hearted friendship from him in view of his intimate connexion with Milan. . . . The Prince of Salerno [1] stands well for one in his situation, is very intimate with the Seneschal, and displays an extreme diligence in Signor Ludovic's affairs. . . . M. d'Argenton [Commynes], as you know, is wholly yours, and his presence here is useful to me, for he is discreet and fairly well informed; moreover, he hopes to profit by you, or at any rate to advantage himself by means of your affairs. He is all out to please us,[2] and though, being distrusted, he enjoys no great authority, yet his influence is not so small but what, fortified by his goodwill and dexterity, it may be a valuable and necessary instrument.' [3]

Much the same account of the political situation on the morrow of the Regent's retirement was given by Commynes himself, when he re-entered the circle of Court sunshine from which he had been excluded by his own misdeeds, and resumed his interrupted Memoirs. 'I must tell how it came about that King Charles, who is now on the throne, undertook his voyage to Italy, in which I took part. . . . There was much dispute as to the likelihood of his going, for the enterprise seemed the height of folly to all wise and experienced men, and no one approved of it save himself and a certain person called Étienne de Vers, a low-born Languedocian without knowledge or experience. Another had taken a hand in it until his courage had failed him, a finance officer called General Brissonnet, to whom the said voyage afterwards brought a Cardinal's hat and much ecclesiastical property and preferment. The other had already acquired many estates; he was Seneschal of Beaucaire and President of the Chambre des Comptes at Paris; and during the King's childhood he had served him well as a Valet de Chambre. 'Twas he who brought the General

[1] 'Il principe di Salerno', said Sanuto, 'è homo brunato, saturnino et penseroso, et quasi de continuo tien li ochii inclinati et ficti a la terra. È savio e astuto': *I Diarii*, vol. i, pp. 350–1.

[2] 'Lo veggo in ogni nostra cosa andare di buone gambe.'

[3] Canestrini et Desjardins, *op. cit.*, pp. 226–9.

into it, and these two were the cause of the said enterprise, for which few praised and many blamed them, since everything requisite for so great an undertaking was lacking. The King was young, feeble, self-willed, and with few wise advisers or good leaders in his company. Money was scarce, and before starting they had to borrow a hundred thousand francs from the Sauli bank at Genoa at 14 per cent. interest, and to raise several other loans elsewhere, as I will recount later. There were no tents or pavilions, yet the winter was come when they began to advance into Lombardy. One good thing they had, and that was a gallant company of young gentlemen, full of courage, but something lacking in discipline. Thus we must conclude that the expedition was conducted throughout by the hand of God, for the sense of its leaders, whom I have named, was unequal to the conduct of it. All the same, they may claim to have been the means of winning great honour and glory for their master.' [1]

It was just to this voice of honour and glory that Charles would have been prone to pay heed, even had not the Royal favourites made themselves, in Gentile Becchi's phrase, the two ears of their master. Prompted by Neapolitan exiles, and stimulated by Milanese bribes, de Vesc and Briçonnet egged Charles on to hearken to the siren voices that called to him from Italy: they dangled before his fascinated eyes the crown of Naples and the sceptre of the East. They told him that along with the throne of France he had inherited the just pretensions of the House of Anjou to its ancient Italian possessions. Let him, then, assert his claim, and dispossess the Aragonese usurper. In doing so he would deliver an oppressed country from an intolerable yoke, and would secure a favourable base of operations against the infidel enemies of Christendom. Had not the age-long policy of France been a steady preparation for the line of action which they advocated? Many ties, commercial and political, bound France and Italy together. France was the suzerain of Saluzzo and Genoa, the ancient friend of Venice, Milan, and Florence; and in all the peninsula there was scarcely a State that had not at some time sought French protec-

[1] P. de Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, pp. 97–100.

tion, and did not then covet French friendship. Let Charles but announce his intention of asserting his title to the Angevin inheritance, and the work of dispossessing the Aragonese intruder would be half accomplished before ever a French soldier had trod the soil of Italy or a French sword had been drawn from its scabbard. On the throne which he had usurped Ferrante of Naples quailed before the menace of accumulated hatreds; he had governed without justice or mercy; an outraged nobility and a down-trodden people execrated his name; and the dearest wish of all his neighbours was to be rid of the oppression of his avid power. To purge Italy of his presence, and by the same stroke to resume the kingdom which for two centuries had owned the sway of French princes, would be an easy task for the military might which lay ready to Charles' hand; and, Naples conquered, a vision of still greater glory would beckon him on. From the eastern seaboard of the kingdom thus acquired he would look across the Adriatic upon the outposts of the oncoming Turk, within whose dominions yet other oppressed peoples awaited the advent of a deliverer. History and tradition, the earnest supplications of God's Vicegerent, the very finger of God Himself pointed to the King of France as the chosen instrument by whose means the infidel torrent should be rolled back, the Holy Places once more set free, and the Crescent displaced by the Cross upon the domes of Constantinople. To whom should Christendom look for salvation but to the Most Christian King? To whom should it entrust the leadership of its crusading armies but to the eldest son of the Church? The father of Charles had prayed for a signal honour for his son, that he might be vouchsafed an opportunity of leading the chivalry of France against the Turk in defence of the Christian religion and for the furtherance of the Catholic faith. Heaven designed to answer that petition, and the hour was at hand.

Permeated though it might be by the influence of a favoured clique, the King's Council was not so entirely destitute of political capacity as to accord an unquestioning acceptance to a policy of adventure. In the spring of 1494, when the projected expedition to Naples had formed the subject of constant discussion for upwards of a year,

Ludovic's ambassador, Count Carlo de Belgiojoso, told his master that, with the exception of Briçonnet, de Vesc, Jean de Baudricourt, and Pierre d'Urfé, there was not a man at Court who had not done his best to prevent the enterprise; and he added that even among those whom he had named as its advocates there was but one, de Vesc, who gave it consistently loyal support.[1] The Beaujeus had retired before a rising tide of folly, of which they found themselves powerless to check the advance.[2] Their old enemy, the Duke of Orleans, concurred with them in disliking the policy of the Government, not because he disapproved of adventure as such, but because the particular adventure upon which Charles had set his mind ran counter to his own ambitions; the invasion of Naples involved an alliance with the Sforza rulers of Milan, and as the heir of Valentine Visconti he had his own pretensions to the ducal coronet which those rulers had assumed. Soldiers condemned the enterprise from a military point of view: if the veteran marshals, d'Esquerdes and Gié, were not louder in their protests, it was only because they looked for high command, and the martial spirit stirred within them at the prospect of armies upon the march; and if Graville, the Admiral, spoke with an uncertain voice, it was only because he was an opportunist who set his sails to catch the breeze, from whatever quarter it might blow. In its political aspects the venture incurred the condemnation of statesmen, who viewed a policy of forcible intervention with an apprehension proportionate to their knowledge of Italian affairs. No one at the French Court was better acquainted with political conditions in the peninsula than Philippe de Commynes, and he trembled to think of that which might ensue, should de Vesc and Briçonnet get their way with the King. It is true that his impartiality seemed to be questionable, for by a curious custom of the day the rulers of one State would pay to some influential person in another a sort of retaining fee to advocate their interests, and Commynes was the accredited agent

[1] H. F. Delaborde, *L'Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*, p. 330.

[2] 'Per più loro riposo *non dirigunt brachium contra torrentem*': Gentile Becchi to Piero de' Medici, 29th November 1493; Canestrini et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques*, vol. i, p. 351.

of Piero de' Medici, who vehemently disliked the policy which the historian so bitterly criticized. But Commynes' objections did not proceed solely from a regard for Florentine susceptibilities. Knowing Italy as he did, he was persuaded that Charles and his advisers would be lost in the intricacies of her affairs, and would fall an easy prey to the wiles of her astute and unscrupulous statesmen.

A monarch older and wiser than Charles might have deemed it well to hearken to all these warning voices. He might have contrasted the inexperience of his favourites with the ripe wisdom of men who had grown old in the service of the State, and asked himself whether it were wise to persist in a course which experts condemned and his subjects disliked. But Charles was young and foolish, greedy for glory, eager for adventure. The expedition appealed to him with irresistible force, and it was soon known all over Europe that a French invasion of Naples was a settled thing.

What were the Neapolitan claims, to the prosecution of which the French monarch and his advisers thus stood committed? To answer this question, we must cast a brief retrospective glance over two centuries of Neapolitan history, and must examine, however cursorily, the constitutional and juridical problems to which that history had given rise. The topic is not enlivening, and it will be well if dullness be the sole defect of its treatment in these pages; but it cannot be omitted, for the assertion of the Angevin claims produced directly the events recorded in this volume, and indirectly affected for half a century thereafter the fortunes of the most important States in Europe. Let the reader, therefore, take heart of grace, and plunge grimly into the labyrinth.

The Kingdom of Naples was a fief of the Church, which, by the Bull *Ad Apostolicae* of 1265 had been conferred by Clement IV upon Charles of Anjou,[1] the brother of Saint Louis, with limitations in favour of him and his issue in an order of direct or collateral succession therein specified, and with provisions for the reversion of the fief to the

[1] He was Count of Provence in right of his wife, Beatrice, the heiress of Raymond Bérenger: see the Genealogical Table at the end of the volume.

Church upon the failure of such issue. Charles of Anjou died in 1285, and was succeeded by his son, Charles II, who after a long and happy reign died in 1309, leaving several sons. The eldest, Charles Martel, King of Hungary in right of his mother, had died during his father's lifetime, leaving a son, Charles, as his successor upon the Hungarian throne. The second son, Louis, had taken Holy Orders and renounced his right of succession. The third, Robert, was alive. Under the terms of the Bull of 1265, which limited the succession to the relative nearest in blood, the successor of Charles II upon the Neapolitan throne was his living son, Robert, and not Charles of Hungary, the son of an elder deceased son, because the son was one degree nearer in blood than the grandson, and rights of representation and substitution were not recognized by the Bull.

Robert, like his father, had a long, prosperous, and happy reign, and upon his death in 1343 was succeeded by Joanna, the elder of his two grand-daughters, children of his dead son, Charles. Joanna died in 1382, childless, though four times married. By the terms of the Bull the throne then passed to her nephew, Charles of Durazzo, son of her sister, Marie, by her marriage with Louis, son of Jean, the youngest son of Charles II.[1] Joanna, however, had quarrelled with Charles of Durazzo, and to spite him, if she could, she had adopted as her heir Louis of Anjou, whom she designated as her successor, and to whom she devised Naples, Provence, and all her seigneuries.

Thus arose the first disputed succession in Naples, and the discord was embittered by its coincidence with the Great Schism in the Church. Pope Urban VI ratified the claim of the legitimist claimant, Charles III: Pope Clement VII recognized the title of Joanna's nominee, Louis I. Charles III was invested by Urban in 1381, defended Naples successfully against the attacks of his rival, accepted the throne of Hungary upon the invitation of the nobles in 1386, and soon afterwards lost his life in his new kingdom. He was succeeded in Naples by his son,

[1] There is some doubt about Marie. According to one account she married, not Louis of Durazzo, but his elder brother, Charles, and the only child of this marriage, Marguerite, married Charles, son of Louis.

Ladislas, who was invested by Boniface IX in 1390, and died childless in 1414, when the rights of the House of Durazzo vested in his sister, Joanna II. Like her predecessor, Ladislas, the new Queen had no children, and the question of the succession produced lively intrigues. Infuriated by the opposition of the French Princes who claimed under the will of Joanna I, the Queen herself contracted a passionate hatred of Frenchmen, drove them from her kingdom, and attempted to perpetuate the exclusion of the Angevin claimants by adopting Alfonso of Aragon as her heir. There was, however, a large section of the Neapolitan nobility staunchly Angevin in its sympathies, and partly under persistent pressure from these nobles, partly through exasperation at the conduct of Alfonso, Joanna eventually cancelled the previous adoption, and adopted Louis III of Anjou in the stead of the Spanish Prince. The new arrangement received the approval of the suzerain, Pope Martin V, who in 1419 annulled the adoption of Alfonso, and confirmed that of Louis III, from whom he accepted homage for the fief. By this Bull of investiture the succession was limited to Louis and his issue, and, failing them, to his brothers, René and Charles, and their issue. To make assurance doubly sure, the French appear also to have got from Joanna a will by which after the death of Louis she designated René as her successor upon the throne. The authenticity of this document was subsequently called in question by the Aragonese, who alleged that it had been forged by their rivals after Joanna's death. Whether it was genuine or spurious was not of any moment from a legal point of view, since succession in a fief was settled by the law of its tenure; the fief could not be devised at the pleasure of a tenant; and any testamentary instrument which attempted such a disposition was inoperative.

The death of Joanna in 1435 was followed by a long struggle which left Naples in the possession of the Aragonese House. The titular King, René of Anjou, left a will by which he disinherited his grandson, René II of Lorraine, the son of his daughter Yolande, and left Maine, Provence, and his claim to Naples to his nephew, Charles of Maine, and his issue, and in default to the King of France. Upon the death without issue of Charles of Maine in December

1481, the ultimate remainder in favour of Louis XI took effect, whilst Charles himself by his own will also made the King the devisee of all his kingdoms, duchies, counties, and lordships.

Charles VIII of France thus claimed to have inherited the Neapolitan crown either by testamentary disposition as the heir of Louis XI, who was entitled under the wills of René of Anjou and Charles of Maine, or, alternatively, by consanguinity as the nearest heir of this same Charles.

From whichever angle it might be regarded, the validity of the claim depended ultimately upon the Bull of 1265, and that document had set forth in clear terms two provisions of cardinal importance: upon the failure of the succession which it established the fief was to return to the Church, and that succession was limited to Charles of Anjou personally and his own heirs, to the exclusion of other members of the House to which Charles belonged. In other words, the intention was to create a Royal Line in the person of the first Charles and the heirs of his body, and the House of Anjou as such took no interest under the limitation. If Charles VIII were not a lawful heir of Charles I of Anjou—and he was not—then by no possibility could he acquire a title by consanguinity with Charles of Maine. Further, the Bull confined the right of succession to collaterals up to the fourth degree, and the claim of the French King, who was five degrees removed from Charles of Maine, must have failed on this ground, even had he himself been an heir of Charles I, and had Charles of Maine been indubitably entitled to the throne.

In point of fact, the title of Charles of Maine was itself of highly doubtful validity. The second House of Anjou, to which Charles of Maine belonged, claimed under the adoption and testamentary disposition of Joanna I, but nothing in the Bull authorized a sovereign to modify the order of succession or conferred power to designate a successor by will. The constitutional heir of Joanna was Charles of Durazzo, a collateral descendant of Charles I, and the claim of the second Angevin House rested upon acts which, so far as the Crown of Naples was concerned, were unconstitutional, illegal, and inoperative. The Angevin descent of the recipient of Joanna's favours,

Louis I, was immaterial, since he was not one of those Angevins whom the Bull embraced within its scope. Neither could his title be mended by the fact that his adoption had been confirmed by Pope Clement VII, for Clement was an anti-Pope, and no schismatic Pontiff could grant away the property of the Church. The true Pope, Urban VI, had ratified the claim of Charles III of Durazzo.

Invalid in its origin, the claim of Charles of Maine was also tainted in its passage at a succeeding stage. Upon the death of Joanna II in 1435 the title of King of Naples was assumed by René le Bon, the son of Louis II of Anjou. If entitled at all, René must have become so under the Bull of 1265, and must therefore have been subject to the provisions which it contained for regulating the succession. Now René had an only daughter, Yolande, who had married Ferri of Lorraine, Count of Vaudemont, and had predeceased her father, leaving a son, René II. As grandson of the first René, the second René was entitled to succeed him under the terms of the Bull ; but of this right the first René took no account, when by his will he purported to leave his Neapolitan claims to his nephew, Charles of Maine.

The claim of Charles VIII to the Neapolitan throne therefore stood thus. He could not assert a title by consanguinity, for he was not a lawful heir of the original grantee. If he claimed under the will of Charles of Maine, his title was riddled with flaws : the second Angevin House, to which Charles of Maine belonged, was entitled solely under the will of Joanna I, who possessed no constitutional power to modify the succession ; it was only by another illegal disposition that Charles of Maine had acquired a claim ; and Charles VIII did not stand to Charles of Maine within the limits of consanguinity specified in the instrument upon which his claim was based.

Upon their conviction of the baselessness of his claim, critics of the King and his advisers have founded the inference that the claim itself was a hollow pretence, put forward to cloak the nakedness of a predatory ambition. For my own part, I share the conviction, but hesitate to embrace the inference, since it runs counter to what we know of Charles. Obstinate in the pursuit of what he

believed to be his own, Charles was wont to exhibit a nice sensitiveness to the rights of others. When Brittany had lain at his mercy, he had forborne to press his claim, because the Chancellor had questioned its legality. At Senlis he had returned to the King of the Romans the territories which he had occupied as the destined husband of Maximilian's daughter; at Barcelona he had restored to the King of Aragon the frontier provinces of which France was in occupation as a mortgagee; at Étaples he had paid large sums of money to the King of England in liquidation of debts contracted by his father and his wife. This Quixotic altruism is rendered the more striking by its contrast with the prevailing political morality of the age, and it is difficult to believe that it can have been designed deliberately as the prelude to an act of hypocritical aggression. It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the King entertained a real, if unwarranted, faith in the soundness of his Neapolitan claims,[1] for a steadfast persuasion of the right to great station or immense possessions is one of the most frequent delusions of mankind. And besides, even though he might be aware of some defects in his own title, what was Charles to think of the title of the rival whom he wished to evict? The Aragonese pretenders, it was true, had induced the suzerain to submit to their intrusion; and that Charles was conscious of the importance of Papal recognition was manifest from his unceasing efforts to secure it for himself. But apart from one or two unfortunate lapses on the part of self-interested Pontiffs, could one shred of evidence be adduced in favour of the Aragonese pretensions? If it was an objection to the title of Louis I of Anjou that he claimed under a will, how did the matter stand with the first Aragonese ruler, Alfonso, who claimed under a will which had been revoked? Should the remoteness of his consanguinity with Charles of Maine be objected to Charles VIII, what should be said of the second Aragonese sovereign, Ferrante, who was no better than the bastard

[1] 'Quod ad Nos iure haereditario pertinet', said Charles, 'quamvis Pius Papa Secundus, volens suos ex humili plebe natos ad principatus fastigium extollere, Regnum ipsum Nobis contra iustitiam abstulit, et illud cuidam Ferdinando de Aragonia concessit': Malipiero, 'Annali Veneti', ed. A. Sagredo, in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. vii, p. 326.

of the first ? Neither Alfonso nor Ferrante could pretend that he stood in the order of succession established by the Bull of 1265 ; if any attention were to be paid to adoption and devise, then the Angevin was greatly superior to the Aragonese claim ; and for nearly two centuries Naples had been held in unquestioned possession by the Royal House of which the King of France was the head. It might well seem to Charles that history overrode juridical subtleties and called aloud to Heaven for the restitution of Naples.

It would be impossible within the scope of this volume to describe Italy in detail at the time of the first French invasion, but the picture will be familiar to the reader, and I need here attempt nothing more ambitious than to recall to his recollection in general outline the political conditions of the country in their relation to the story which I am about to tell.

At the moment of the great calamity which was to spell destruction to her wealth, death to her liberty, and the abrupt eclipse of all her hopes, Italy enjoyed a material prosperity nowhere then equalled, and perhaps not often at any time surpassed, in any other land. Agriculture, industry, and commerce flourished side by side ; the peninsula hummed with wealth-producing activity ; and in nearly every part it reflected the general economic progress of the whole. Agriculture turned to account the entire surface of the land : the irrigated plain, the reclaimed swamp, the torrent confined within due limits, the barren hill-side rendered fertile and taught to bear the fruit-tree or the vine, testified to its progress, and contributed to swell its yield. That yield more than sufficed for the needs of the people, and the substantial surplus available for export brought a steady supply of raw material to Italian factories. Italian ships traded with all the ports of Europe and the Levant ; Italian workshops were capable of supplying nearly all the world's requirements. Italy worked her own minerals, and founded her metals ; she owned great factories for the production of flax and hemp ; at Bologna and in Naples she weaved silks and silk stuffs ; in the textiles of Florence she could match the best products of French or Flemish looms ; and the armour of Milan, and the

exquisite glass, wonderful mirrors, and rich brocades of Venice were in demand in all the markets of the world. From these multifarious activities a highly developed commercial system and a financial ability amounting to genius extracted the maximum of advantage, and the collective wealth of the country had attained proportions positively stupendous. In Venice alone the public revenue amounted to considerably more than one million ducats; in Florence the cash normally in circulation amounted to four million florins; European Governments were indebted in vast sums to Florentine bankers; a well-informed observer estimated at seven hundred thousand golden florins the annual revenue which the Milanese furnished to its masters; and even in backward Naples, the least favoured and the most oppressed of all Italian States, the pastoral wealth was such as to yield one hundred thousand ducats in the tolls paid by the flocks and herds, as they passed each spring from the Apulian plains to the cooler and more verdant pastures of the Abruzzi hills.

In this golden age, as is well known, culture had become the foster-child of affluence, and the life of Italy had risen to an astonishing level of luxury and splendour. Enlightened Governments vied with lettered millionaires in intelligent patronage of art and letters: freed by a generous support from sordid care, the scholar or the man of science could devote the best faculties of his mind to the furtherance of knowledge or the progress of invention, the artist or the architect give free play to the fancies of a fertile brain; the University and the Academy, the library and the observatory, rose upon every hand by the side of the cathedral and the palace; and in the masterpieces of her painters, the miracles of her builders, the *chefs-d'œuvre* of her scholars and thinkers and poets, Italy showed, as none but Athens has ever shown before or since, how bright a light the human mind can shed in the full splendour of its most dazzling effulgence. 'Never since the decline of the Roman Empire more than a thousand years before', as a great historian put it,[1] 'had Italy experienced prosperity and happiness as great as that in which she securely reposed in the year of grace 1490 and in the immediately preceding

[1] Guicciardini, *La Storia d'Italia*, ed. A. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 4.

and following years. Everywhere peace and tranquillity reigned supreme; the sterile hills no less than the fertile plains had been brought under cultivation; no foreign ruler bore sway within her confines; not only did she abound in inhabitants, merchandise, and riches, but she was distinguished by the magnificence of many Princes, by the splendour of many noble and beautiful cities, by the presence of the Papacy and the majesty of the Church; she was rich in experienced statesmen and in noble and accomplished minds; she shone by her industry and her arts. Adorned by so many gifts, and not devoid of military glory, as the age understood it, she deservedly enjoyed among all peoples a distinguished reputation and renown.'

Unhappily, however, no material prosperity, no wealth or culture, could obscure the fact that Italy was in a state of political degeneracy and decline. Though the discoverer of political science, the exponent of the principles of government, and the instructress of mankind in the art and practice of diplomacy, Italy had not profited by her skill to diagnose the disease of which she was sickening or to find a remedy for the ills which threatened her with dissolution. Whereas in the rest of Europe there were conditions which promoted unity and factors which prevented disintegration, in Italy the conditions were lacking, the factors inoperative. There was, indeed, a national self-consciousness, and from the vantage point of his superior civilization and intellectual pre-eminence the Italian looked down with scorn and dislike upon a barbarous world. But the intellectual and spiritual affinities which revealed to Italy her singularity did not suffice to bring about a perception of the community of her interests or to imbue her with any sense of national solidarity. Her geographical conformation and her political development alike made for separatism. In this long and narrow peninsula, which the mountains cut in two, nature had paved the way for small political entities, and distance and difficulty of communication helped to keep them apart. Historically, her people had wandered in the wilderness, while happier nations pressed on towards the promised land. The two great forces which dominated the mediaeval world had moulded her destinies for ill; and between them the Empire and

the Church had done to Italy a threefold disservice. In their strength they had prevented the rise of any central power, the growth of any national independence; in their decline they had permitted the units which they had failed to weld into a homogeneous whole to burst asunder the feeble bonds by which they were insecurely united; and in the animosity of their conflicting ambitions they had engendered hatreds which spread a deadly venom throughout the body politic of the peninsula. Continued long after the protagonists had retired from the arena, the strife of Guelf and Ghibelline had set city against city, and had divided the cities against themselves, until in the exhaustion of her factious fury a distracted country had been driven to the sacrifice of liberty that she might procure the blessing of peace.

The communes in which freedom had thus perished had passed for the most part under the rule of *condottiere* despots, of whom the Visconti and Sforza rulers of Milan are the type. Wielding a power which a brutal personal ability had won, and in the last resort mere brute force sustained, selfish, greedy, cunning, and unscrupulous, these tyrants contaminated political life and debased political morality. Under their evil influence 'statecraft was developing more and more into an organized system of over-reaching and bad faith; to consider any engagement binding was looked upon as a mark of imbecility. Treachery and violence were the order of the day. No one expected anything else, and all the relations between the various States and Princes were poisoned by envy and suspicion'.[1] 'Condottierism', as a French historian[2] has expressed it, 'dominates the political and social as much as the military history of the Peninsula. . . . Politics are purely personal. The town, the individual, the State—each thought only of self-aggrandizement, following the bent of genius and of happy chance. Little by little the Republican form of government disappeared, and the Princely took its place. In this respect also Italy followed the general European tendencies. But whereas in France, in England, in Spain, rulers instinctively confounded with their own private greed

[1] Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste*, Eng. trans. by F. I. Antrobus, vol. v, p. 4.
[2] M. Henry Lemonnier in Lavisse, *Histoire de France*, vol. v, part i, p. 7.

the conception of a State superior to themselves and durable, the Italian Princes confounded it with, and subordinated it to, themselves. Nothing in this connexion is more striking than the history of a Ludovic or the maxims of the *Prince*.'

As a result of the conditions here described, the movement which was conferring strength upon other nations stood arrested in Italy. As the commune gave way to the signory, and as the stronger absorbed the weaker principalities, a few greater States emerged; but these had achieved no nearer approach to unity or federation than was to be found in an uneasy equipoise. In 1493 there were an appearance of calm and a show of concord, but the appearance was deceptive and the show unreal. Between Governments, as between individuals, there can be no true concord but such as is broad based upon mutual friendship and esteem. The balance between the States of Italy was artfully contrived by diplomacy upon a shifting basis of suspicion and fear. Here and there the mind of a true statesman, such as Lorenzo de' Medici, might see with a wider vision and cherish a nobler hope; but in the main the objects at which Italian Governments aimed were selfish, and the alliances into which they entered were formed with no thought for the common weal. Strong as it was in the breast of every Italian, dislike of the foreigner was a cold and tame emotion compared with his fear of a powerful neighbour or his jealous hatred of a successful rival. There were few lengths to which he would not go under the empire of these sentiments; it was Italian statesmen who most fervently pressed upon the King of France the policy of intervention, and it was upon Italian lips that he heard the most seductive invitations to assert his Italian claims. To gratify their own ambition, these self-centred rulers did not scruple to traffic in slices of their country, 'the Northerners offering the south, and the Southerners the north'. Did a Pope quarrel with his Neapolitan neighbour, immediately he would turn to the French monarch and denounce the Aragonese usurpation. Did Venice fear the ambition of Naples, or covet the territory of Milan, unhesitatingly she would invite the French Council to resuscitate the dormant rights of Anjou or of Orleans.

In Milan a Ludovic Sforza would welcome the invading foreigner, if thereby he might buttress the shaky structure of his ill-gotten power; and everywhere there were cities and provinces which in the age-long strife of the peninsula had succumbed to stronger rivals, and longed for a chance to cast off a galling yoke. In this selfish and shortsighted pursuit of momentary advantage, heedless of ulterior consequences, Italy devised her own undoing. 'Accustomed to see internal rivalries and questions of succession settled by compromise, she suspected no danger to herself in the pretensions of foreign kings to certain parts of the peninsula. She did not realize that behind those kings were the States they ruled, and that therein lay a wholly new force.' [1]

Attacked in a time of political transition, when the old communes had not yet adapted themselves to changed conditions, and mediaeval institutions which had survived their usefulness still obstructed the creation of a system more suited to the age, Italy was no match for the military monarchies which could concentrate their power at the bidding of a single will.[2] She was not in the way to find the path of salvation, for in a world in which might too often identifies itself with right she had committed the one political sin which allows of no repentance—she had entrusted her defence to a mercenary soldiery. A diarist who chronicled the coming of Charles computed that, if Italy had been able to put all her forces together into the field, she could have mustered an army of sixty thousand men and outnumbered her enemy by more than two to one; and it was a fact that at Fornovo the united forces of Venice and Milan were more numerous than all the troops with which the French King had at the first invaded the country. But this writer, being himself an Italian, took no account either of the inherent badness of the *condottiere* system or of its evil effect upon the morale of the people among whom it flourished. I shall have something to say later about Italian methods of fighting and about the ineffectiveness of the Italian mercenary soldier. Here it must suffice to remark that this ineffective-

[1] Lavisse, *Histoire de France*, vol. v, part i, p. 12.

[2] Villari, *Niccolò Machiavelli e i suoi Tempi*, Eng. trans., vol. i.

ness was not the full extent of Italy's misfortune. In substituting the paid soldier for the old burgher militia, despotism had extinguished the defiant spirit whereof might once have been forged the sure shield of national freedom. Taught to rely for his protection upon hireling troops, the citizen had abandoned the profession of arms for industry and commerce or art and learning. The fate which some feared for England in the first decade of the twentieth century had overtaken Italy in the last decade of the fifteenth. She was enervated by the possession of long-accumulated wealth and the enjoyment of fancied security; she had forgotten what it was to listen to the tramp of foreign armies upon her soil; her people were absorbed in the production of wealth and the pursuit of pleasure. But between the two countries which seemed to be sick of the same malady there was this vital difference. In England the patriotic and martial spirits lay dormant: in Italy the one was unborn, and the other had ceased to be. Italy, therefore, could not achieve the swift moral regeneration by which in the crisis of a nation's fate its manhood could be inspired to place the impulses of the spirit above the claims of the mind and the calls of the flesh, and to arise resplendent in the majesty of voluntary self-sacrifice.

By the end of the fifteenth century five of the Italian States had established their pre-eminence: these were the Republics of Venice and Florence, the Duchy of Milan, the Papacy as temporal lord of the States of the Church, and the Kingdom of Naples.

Of these five States Venice was by far the most powerful. By a strong political organization and a consistent policy unswervingly pursued, by its commercial genius and maritime skill, and by a cunning use of the advantages of its geographical position, the little community of fishermen once existing precariously upon the Venetian lagoons had grown gradually to be almost, though not quite, the equal of the great powers of Europe. On the mainland Venice had owned Vicenza, Feltre, and Bassano since the fourteenth century; Verona and Padua, Udine and Friuli, Brescia, Bergamo, Ravenna, and Crema had been added in the first half of the fifteenth; and from the Duke of Ferrara

she had lately wrested Rovigo and the Polesine. Illyria and part of Dalmatia, Corfu, Durazzo, Nauplia, and Argos, Crete and Cyprus also rendered allegiance to the Republic of St. Mark. In her Italian possessions the inhabitants numbered some one and three-quarter million souls; the population of the Dalmatian, Greek, and other possessions cannot be computed.[1] The revenue of Venice amounted to one million two hundred thousand ducats; thirty-six thousand men sailed the seas under her flag; nearly half as many were employed in her arsenal. In the beginning of the century, at the height of her maritime ascendancy, her flag had flown from many hundred masts, and still her merchantmen went forth in four great convoys to trade with the ports of England and Flanders, of Egypt, of Syria, and of Greece, Constantinople, and the Black Sea. Designed and built with her own peculiar skill, well armed, manned by her people, and commanded by her nobles, her ships of war conferred upon her a naval supremacy in the Mediterranean which no Christian power was in a position to dispute. The like of her dockyards did not exist in Europe. 'The arsenal of Venice . . . was its palladium; the high organization of this establishment, the technical skill of its workmen, the specially selected body of the "arsenalotti" to whom the republic entrusted the duty of guarding the senate and great council, and its admirable discipline were for centuries the envy of other European powers. . . . At the acme of its prosperity the arsenal employed 16,000 workmen.'[2] Though greatly inferior to her naval might, the military strength of the Republic was by no means contemptible. The weakness in her armour consisted in the fact that upon land, apart from the light horsemen raised in her subject territories, she depended upon the *condottiere* system for her offensive and defensive weapons. In her contests with Italian rivals, who employed the same instrument, she was at no disadvantage in this respect; nor could any of them hope to compete with the

[1] See E. Fueter, *Geschichte des Europäischen Staatensystems von 1492–1559* (Munich, 1919), where will be found a clear and thoughtful account of the economic and military situation of the several Italian States, my indebtedness to which I take this opportunity of acknowledging.

[2] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ninth edit., vol. xxiv, p. 143.

possessor of wealth as great as hers in the markets where *condottiere* princelings knocked down their cannon fodder to the highest bidder. But when matched against more formidable opponents she could look for no superiority either in the quantity or in the quality of her troops; France, for example, could outbid her when she pleased; and whilst the heavy cavalry of Italy was inferior to the French, her foot-soldiers were no match at all for the national infantries which Europe was beginning to train upon the model of the invincible Swiss.

The commercial supremacy of Venice arose from the use which the mercantile and maritime genius of her people had made of the fortunate accident of her geographical position. Behind her, upon the land, lay the commercial routes which gave access to the markets of Europe, and especially to those of Austria and Germany. Before her lay the sea, and upon that element she had acquired a monopoly of trade with all the harbours of the eastern Mediterranean. She was thus the channel through which there flowed in both directions an unending golden stream of commercial interchange. The silks and spices of the East, its carpets and embroideries, and whatsoever of its productions the markets of Europe might desire, were carried in Venetian bottoms on their way to the consumer: the commodities which Europe offered in exchange passed through Venetian warehouses. To her carrying trade and the operations incident to a world centre of commercial interchange Venice added a less lucrative, but still appreciable, industrial activity, exporting annually glass, jewellery, and precious stuffs to a considerable amount. The greatest economic prosperity, however, is apt to be at the mercy of some insidious evil or some untoward accident, and at the moment when we first concern ourselves with the fortunes of Venice, her seemingly unassailable commercial supremacy was already undermined. Those fortunes were centred in the East, and hinged upon her naval and commercial position in the eastern Mediterranean. In a long and exhausting war with the Turk she had already begun to suffer successive losses among her colonial possessions and mercantile outposts, when a yet more deadly blow was dealt her in the discovery of a new route to the Indies. The commodities

which were laden into Venetian bottoms in the ports of Egypt and the Levant were borne thither laboriously by caravans of camels, traversing the inhospitable desert, and paying toll upon the way to the marauding bandit and the rapacious Oriental chief. This costly route could not compete for long with a direct sea-passage. Venice saw the danger, and for a moment thought to meet it by driving a canal through the isthmus of Suez, and so linking her own Mediterranean to the Eastern seas; but she saw, too, that such a canal would be ruinously expensive and strategically indefensible; and no effect was given to her grandiose conception. From this moment the decline which had already set in was gradually accelerated. The discoveries of Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus were about to divert mankind's commercial activities into new channels; and the banner of St. Mark would float no longer over the water-ways whereon the commerce of the world passed to and fro.

Moreover, Venice was further weakened by the results of the imperialist policy which she had pursued in Italy, for her expansion on the mainland had been a blunder strategically, economically, and politically. Strategically, she had once been quasi-insular in the security of her impregnable lagoons: now she was readily vulnerable in her continental acquisitions, to the defence of which she must devote from a diminishing revenue sums that might more profitably have been expended on the maintenance of her fleets. Economically, her commitments on land tended to distract her attention from her true sphere of interest and activity. Politically, her expansion intensified the jealous hatred with which she was everywhere regarded. 'At the end of the fifteenth century Venice . . . became an object of envy and terror to the Italian States. They envied her because she alone was tranquil, wealthy, powerful, and free. They feared her because they had good reason to suspect her of encroachment; and it was foreseen that, if she got the upper hand in Italy, all Italy would be the property of the families inscribed upon the Golden Book.'[1] The rulers of Milan had never ceased to regret the loss of Brescia and Bergamo. The Popes hated the haughty Republic

[1] John Addington Symonds, *Studies in Italy and Greece*, p. 186.

which had filched Ravenna from the patrimony of the Church, and paid but scant respect to the Pontifical authority. The King of Naples trembled for his seaports on the Adriatic. There was scarcely a State in the peninsula which in the last resort would not prefer the prospect of foreign invasion to the possibility of Venetian annexation, and mistrust of Venetian designs was the chief obstacle to union in the face of foreign foes. For close upon twenty years Venice had been left to carry on unaided the defence of Italy against the Turk; her danger had aroused no sympathy; her appeals had met with no response. That bitter experience had confirmed her in her policy of cautious egotism, and she was concerned with the fate of her neighbours only in so far as she might hope to profit by their misfortunes. She did not really desire the dangerous proximity of the French, but she thought that, should they come, a prudent neutrality might yield its fruits. While her rivals exhausted themselves in attempts at self-preservation, and the invaders squandered their resources in effecting conquests which they could not retain, Venice would look on in peace and security, sparing her wealth, husbanding her strength, biding her time. Who could tell but what, when the alarm was over, she might not be found to have accomplished her desire, and to have won without effort the undisputed hegemony of Italy?[1]

The Republic of Florence, like the Republic of Venice, still retained her ancient constitution, and in its spirit that constitution was far more liberal than the polity which a close oligarchy had reared upon the Lagoons; but time had wrought great changes upon the banks of the Arno, and now the forms of freedom served merely to disguise the despotism which the skill of the Medici had built up on the ruins of democracy. By their political astuteness, by a clever and not too scrupulous use of their great wealth, and by a cunning identification of the city's interests with their own, this gifted family had surely but insensibly absorbed the State. That State had no equal but Venice

[1] 'Stavano attenti e preparati a valersi di ogni accidente che potesse aprire loro la via allo imperio di tutta Italia': Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. A. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 6.

in wealth, and none in intellectual distinction. If she did not yet possess the whole of Tuscany, where Siena and Lucca maintained an independent existence, already she exerted a political control over the greater part of that province. It was mainly by her wealth that she would count in a time of convulsion ; though her borders touched the sea, she had neither war vessels nor mercantile marine ; she trusted to *condottiere* armies for defence on land ; and she was cordially detested in most of the cities which were subject to her rule. But so long as she retained the wealth which could command the services of mercenary armies, she must count for much in the politics of the peninsula. She enjoyed, too, a great advantage in the security which her geographical position conferred upon her. Save for her littoral, she was enclosed on all sides by mountainous country difficult or impossible of access by hostile troops. In the fifteenth century five roads led into Tuscany from Lombardy, and four passes gave access from Romagna : many of these routes were impracticable for troops ; and all traversed districts in which subsistence was naturally difficult, and could readily be made impossible by the vigilance of the defence. The Tuscan frontiers were also studded with fortresses and strong places, which an invading army must reduce and hold. Sarzana, Sarzanella, Fivizzano, Pietrasanta, and Leghorn guarded the sea approaches ; Firenzuola and Marradi, Castracaro, Barberino, and Scarperia protected the north ; towards Siena were Poggibonsi, Colle, S. Gimignano, and Volterra ; and S. Stefano, Borgo S. Sepolcro, Monte S. Savino, Cortona, and Montepulciano barred the way on the east and south. The city of Florence itself, could it be reached through the ring of encircling forts, would present a task of no ordinary difficulty to a besieger ; two armies, which he could scarcely hope to provision, would be necessary for its investment ; and its natural and artificial strength was believed to make it impregnable, at all events before the coming of the French guns.

In the commercial prosperity which formed the foundation of her power Florence had passed the zenith of her fortunes, and for half a century her wool and silk industries had suffered a progressive decline. Her production of

textiles was still important, however, and she still sold many thousand rolls of cloth made of Spanish wool, some thousands of pieces of the more valuable broadcloth made of English wool, and silks, silk stuffs, brocades, and precious fabrics to the value of a million of gold annually. As an industrial community she set small store by agriculture, sacrificing her rural to her urban population in the belief that the cheap food which is at the root of low production costs would best enable her manufacturers to undersell their foreign rivals. Like her industries, her banking business was also past its prime, and in the branches which it had established in France and many other foreign lands it had given hostages to fortune in times of international complications. But as yet the commercial and financial decline of Florence was unsuspected by the world at large, for her prestige was amply maintained alike by the wealth which she had inherited from a more prosperous past and by the skillful statecraft of her rulers.

If it was to their identification of themselves with Florence that the Medici owed their power, it was largely to her identification with the great Lorenzo that Florence owed her influence. With the insight of a true statesman Lorenzo had seen that the welfare of Florence, and not of Florence alone, demanded the maintenance of a general peace, and in all the affairs of the peninsula he had played the part of moderator with a consistency and success that had won for him the fame of being 'the balance of Italy'. An age absorbed in the art and craft of politics admired his sagacity and prudence; a generation devoted to culture respected his social gifts, intellectual attainments, literary interests, and a patronage of art and learning which combined munificence with discrimination; and his fellow citizens dwelt with pleasure upon the spectacle of a Florentine who abroad was the equal of princes and at home kept up the appearance of a burgher as simple as themselves. 'Lorenzo had striven to identify the Medici family with Florence, and had been himself the representative and expression of the desires and aspirations of Florentine life and culture. He had also learned that the existence of Italy depended upon the maintenance of internal peace. . . . His early experience had taught him how difficult was the

position which he had to maintain, that of the chief citizen of a free city, whose fortunes and whose very existence depended on exercising absolute power without seeming to do so. . . . Lorenzo did what all Italian statesmen were doing; he identified his city for good and ill with his own house. He worked craftily and insidiously, not by open violence, and in the midst of his self-seeking he retained the large views of a statesman, and embodied the culture of his age.'[1]

It may be assumed with some confidence that Lorenzo could not have prevented the French invasion, had his life been prolonged; but so great were his influence and reputation that his premature death in April 1492 was universally reckoned by his countrymen among the causes productive of the impending catastrophe. It is certainly the fact that the political equilibrium of Italy did not long survive the removal of the moderating influence which had taught self-restraint to the ambitious, and inspired confidence in the timid. In Florence itself the death of Lorenzo was the occasion of a great and mischievous change. Piero de' Medici, the eldest of Lorenzo's sons, inherited his father's power, but little or nothing of his father's ability and prudence. Scarcely twenty-two years old, he had in full measure youth's careless fondness for pleasure and physical exercise. His intellectual qualities were fairly good; Angelo Poliziano had taught him the humanities; he could turn out a neat copy of verses, and was an agreeable talker. But he was self-confident and rash, intolerably proud, contemptuous of advice, impatient of opposition, and careless of public opinion. Brought up as a prince, and having the princely outlook, he despised the arts with which his father had maintained, by concealing, his authority, and followed his own policy without troubling himself about the support of Florentine opinion. That support he speedily forfeited, even the most faithful adherents of the House of Medici finding it hard to tolerate his haughtiness and condone his folly. He would not listen when they reminded him of his father's cautious prudence, and advised him to conform to the old Florentine ways. In his jealousy of his handsome cousin, Giovanni, the son of

[1] Creighton, *History of the Papacy*, vol. iii, p. 141.

Pier Francesco de' Medici, whose good looks made him a successful rival in the good graces of Florentine ladies, he did not scruple even to divide his own House against itself; and Giovanni and his brother, Lorenzo, were driven into exile. He violated the constitution by openly exercising power before having attained the age which the law required in the holders of public office, and then disrespectfully neglected the duties of his position, as though governmental routine were beneath his attention. Criticism deepened into anger when he took the control of State affairs from the old magistracy, to give it to his father's secretary, Bibbiena, an adventurer from a subject city. Anger in turn was reinforced by fear when he inaugurated a policy which ran counter to Florentine traditions, sentiments, and interests. The close alliance of Florence with France was cherished by his fellow citizens as a relation of immemorial antiquity: Florentines liked to trace to Charlemagne the first origins of their commonwealth; they were proud to display the lilies of France upon their civic escutcheon; and in many banking and commercial establishments in France they enjoyed the pleasant fruits of an ancient friendship. To that friendship Florentine sentiment could not easily be made untrue; yet Piero ignored it, threw himself into the arms of Naples, and thereby alienated the Government of France, alarmed the Government of Milan, destroyed his father's life-work, the equilibrium of Italy, and imperilled all that his city held dear. The exiled sons of Pier Francesco de' Medici might then persuade themselves that they would be consulting the true interests of their city if they were to appeal to the King of France to come and rid the Republic of their cousin's yoke. And meanwhile, in the city from which they had been expelled, anger, gloom, and terror fed upon a prophetic message of impending doom, as week by week in the pulpit of the Cathedral Girolamo Savonarola, the inspired Prior of St. Mark, told how the King of France must come into Italy, to afflict, but to purify, the Church.

The Duchy of Milan stretched from the Sesia to the Adda and from the Alps to the Po. This territory was thickly populated, and at the end of the fifteenth century

probably contained considerably over one million inhabitants. Its agriculture, industry, and commerce were all flourishing. Industrially, it was particularly noted for its armour, which was incomparably the best in Europe; and it exported silks and woollen goods, velvets, and precious fabrics. As a commercial centre it could not, indeed, compare with Venice, but it had its importance as the meeting-place of the roads which converged upon the Alpine passes. Agriculturally, it was assured of prosperity by the exceptional fertility of the rich Lombard plain, which yielded crops amply sufficient for the sustenance of its crowded urban populations. It was, as we have seen, the belief of a competent judge that the Dukes of Milan derived a revenue of seven hundred thousand florins from their principality. Unlike Venice, which was secure behind the fleets that guarded her inaccessible lagoons, and unlike Florence, which was safe behind her mountain ramparts, the Milanese invited attack by the vulnerability of its open frontiers. Fortresses, indeed, there were, and two of them, the citadels of Milan and Cremona, were of unusual strength; but something more than strongholds was wanted to protect a rich and smiling plain, and with that something Milan was never able to equip herself satisfactorily. Like her neighbours, she possessed, indeed, ample wealth to command the services of *condottiere* armies, but, like them, she would soon discover in contact with the national forces of the great powers the inadequacy of that protection. Even apart from the more remote danger, her situation was uneasy. She was detested by her subject territories, which she loaded with taxes, and was surrounded by actual or potential enemies, who feared her might, and envied her wealth. On the east was Venice, which saw in the Sforza State the chief obstacle to a continued pursuit of its policy of expansion. On the north lay the Swiss Confederacy, and as the people of the southern Cantons looked down from their barren mountains, their gaze fell covetously upon the fertile fields of Lombardy. To the south was Florence, a State not, indeed, animated by a martial temper, nor possessed of military power, but jealous and suspicious of its formidable neighbour, and of late tending to an ever closer union with the Neapolitan

enemies of the Sforzas. On the west was Savoy, a principality harmless enough in itself, but dangerous in that it had neither the power nor the wish to oppose the designs of the great monarchy which lay behind it; and the rulers of Milan could never for a moment ignore the menace of France, suzerain of Saluzzo, lord of Asti, and heir to the claim of Valentine Visconti to possess the Milanese.

For the immense disadvantage of her geographical characteristics Milan found some compensation in her possession of Genoa, with its ships, its harbour, its dockyards, and its seafaring population. But it was an insecure possession, for Genoa, like the Milanese itself, was at the mercy of land armies, and the alternations of contending factions had given the city a bad name for political inconstancy. Genoa, said a contemporary historian,[1] was 'naturally mutable, inclined first to one side and then to the other, and always more eager for novelty and excitement than for peace and security'. It was in consequence of its own divisions that the city had recently witnessed the ignominious extinction of its political existence. In 1487 Genoa was ruled by Cardinal Fregoso. She was then at war with Florence; the struggle went badly for her, and the Florentines captured Sarzana. The enemies of the Cardinal—the Fieschi, the Adorni, and Battista Fregoso, the nephew whom he had driven from power—saw in the discontent aroused by Genoese reverses an opportunity to terminate his rule. In his extremity the Cardinal resorted to the favourite device of harassed governments in Genoa: he determined to invoke the protection of a foreign power, and turned to Milan. Some attempt at resistance was made by the opposition party, but it could not be maintained when the Milanese forces presented themselves before the city; and in 1488 a Genoese embassy waited upon Ludovic to confirm the surrender of the city, swear fealty, offer the flag of St. George, and present the symbols of civic authority. Ludovic requested the King of France as nominal suzerain of Genoa to sanction the new arrangement, and the young Duke of Milan was duly invested with the fief. Thus had the great commercial and naval centre which once had contended on terms of equality

[1] Corio, *Storia di Milano*, ed. de Magri, vol. iii, p. 549.

with Venice herself sunk to be the dependent adjunct of a Sforza principality.

The peculiar situation of the Milanese ruler, if not, as Commynes believed, the factor which determined the French invasion, was at all events a powerful contributory cause. Ludovic Sforza could never for a moment forget that he ruled by a double usurpation; whilst his father had dispossessed the Visconti, he himself had dispossessed his father's heir; and the whole object of his policy was to occupy and embarrass those who might be tempted to question the validity of his title. Less than half a century had passed since Francesco Sforza, the renowned *condottiere* leader, had appropriated by force and guile the inheritance of the Visconti. Francesco had enjoyed his spoils for sixteen years, and had died in 1466, leaving his principality to his son, Galeazzo Maria, a monster of treachery, cruelty, and lust, who fell ten years later beneath the poniards of his outraged nobles. The murdered ruler left a son, Gian Galeazzo, who was then eight years of age, and was duly proclaimed Duke in his father's stead under the regency of his mother, Bona of Savoy. Of small intellectual capacity and of loose moral character, Bona was totally unfitted to discharge the duties of the post to which her husband's assassination called her, and the power which she knew not how to wield was wielded for her by Cecco Simonetta, a secretary of the great Francesco. Simonetta had spent many years in faithful service of the Milanese State, but he was unconnected with it by birth, being a native of the March of Ancona, whence his employer had summoned him to Milan; and, like Bibbiena at Florence, he was hated as a foreign intruder by the people of the State he ruled. His power was especially distasteful to his old master's sons, the uncles of the young Gian Galeazzo, upon whom Galeazzo Maria had thrust a safe rustic seclusion, but who upon his death had hastened to return to Milan in the expectation of appropriating for themselves the power which had devolved upon their nephew. Of these Sforza brothers the ablest was Ludovic, who in 1479, upon the death of the eldest, succeeded to the Dukedom of Bari and to the leadership of the party which opposed Simonetta. Perhaps Simonetta could not in any case

have maintained himself for long against the machinations of Ludovic and the hatred of the nobles, but his fall was accelerated by the levity of Bona, who resented Simonetta's censure of an amorous intrigue which she had begun with a low-born Adonis in her household, and deserted to his enemies. Of the opportunity thus offered Ludovic availed himself promptly and to the full. He arrested and executed Simonetta, placed Bona in confinement in one of the ducal country-seats, took the young Duke into his own keeping, and seized the reins of government.

I intend in the next chapter to follow the course of the diplomatic negotiations which preceded and paved the way for Charles VIII's invasion of Italy, when the importance of Ludovic's rôle will necessitate a detailed study of his policy. But even at the risk of some repetition it will, perhaps, be for the convenience of the reader that I should give in advance a bird's-eye view of the situation of each of the States with which my narrative will be concerned, and should here glance in outline at the political relationships, sympathies, and aspirations of the Milanese Government.

At the time when Ludovic succeeded to power, the policy of Milan was determined by her fear of Venice, and she had cultivated the friendship of Florence and Naples as the best protection against Venetian encroachment. In pursuance of this policy the young Duke, Gian Galeazzo, whilst as yet a mere boy, had been betrothed to Isabella of Aragon, the infant daughter of Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, the son and heir of King Ferrante of Naples. This marriage Ludovic had no pretext to break off, and, had he been furnished with a pretext, he would not at that time have felt the desire. He could not forget that the Royal House of Naples could set up a claim of its own to Milan under the will of the last Visconti Duke. He was aware, too, that his accession to power was not unacceptable to King Ferrante, who earnestly desired a close union with Milan, and had put no confidence in Simonetta. Ferrante had lately experienced the dangerous effects of his unpopularity with his subjects, many of whom cherished an historic affection for France, and all of whom detested the cruelty and oppression of his rule ; he dreaded the prospect of any disturbance

in Italy, which might open the way to foreign intervention; and sharing the belief of Lorenzo de' Medici that the safety of Italy depended upon her unity,[1] he also shared his desire to stabilize Italian politics by creating in a real union of Naples, Florence, and Milan an effective offset to the alliance of Venice and the Papacy.[2] The marriage contract of the young Gian Galeazzo was accordingly upheld, and in 1489 Isabella came to Milan to become its Duchess.

Designed to strengthen the alliance of Naples and Milan, the marriage soon turned out to be prolific of very different results. About two years after the marriage of his nephew Ludovic himself took to wife the daughter of that Duke of Ferrara whom the allies had lately defended against Venetian aggression. The advent of the Regent's bride intensified the growing estrangement between the actual ruler of Milan and the wife of its titular Prince. High spirited, accomplished, and courageous, Isabella could not find it in her nature to submit tamely to the condition of subjugation in which Ludovic kept her amiable but ineffective husband. Virtually a prisoner in the Castle of Pavia, Gian Galeazzo enjoyed of his Dukedom nothing but the name, and Isabella was quick to suspect that the crafty and ambitious Regent, not content with having grasped the essentials of power, might cherish projects for acquiring also the titular dignity which alone he lacked. In Isabella's breast, therefore, a feeling of injury and a sense of foreboding gave bitterness to the tenderest emotions; she resented the indignities put upon the gentle husband whom she had learned to love with a passionate affection; and with the wife's devotion there mingled something of the fierce maternal instinct which arises invincible in defence of a helpless child. These feelings were embittered a hundredfold with the coming of her cousin, Beatrice d'Este, Ludovic's bride. Beatrice was beautiful and accomplished, able and ambitious, vivacious and pleasure-loving. Brought up in a cultured Court, she had imbibed the very essence of the Renaissance spirit. A love of luxury

[1] 'Lo stare bene insieme era la salute de tucti': Ferrante to Marino Tomacello, 14th October 1493; Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, vol. ii, part ii, p. 278.

[2] Guicciardini, *Storie d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 5.

and splendour, the joy of ostentatious magnificence, delight in the elegant pleasures of refined ease, these were innate in her, and as consort of the Prince who controlled the revenues of Milan she could gratify them to the full. Her Court became a place of gaiety and opulence and crowded life. It was besieged by those with something to lose and by those with something to gain; poets sang her praises; artists reproduced her features; and in the person of the incomparable Leonardo da Vinci even genius itself stooped to minister to the gratification of her transient whims. Courted and flattered, gorgeously attired, resplendent with priceless gems, Beatrice was the sun around which the social world of Milan revolved, while in the gloom and solitude of Pavia the poor Duke and his affronted Duchess dragged out a maimed existence, unhonoured, unattended, eclipsed, and ignored. Nothing could have been more natural than that Isabella in her indignation should turn where she might pour out the tale of her wrongs in a sympathetic ear, and appeal to the Royal House whose honour was slighted in her person.

'You married me to Giovan Galeazzo', she wrote[1] to her father, 'in the expectation that he would rule over the land of his fathers. He is come to man's estate, and is the father of children; yet he is deprived of all power; nay more, he is left almost destitute, and it is only by repeated entreaties that he can extract from Ludovic and his ministers the bare necessaries of life. Ludovic manages everything at his own sweet will; it is he who treats of war and peace, makes laws, and imposes taxes; it is by him that immunities and pardons are granted. Deprived of resources, penniless, we lead the life of private persons, for it is Ludovic, not Gian Galeazzo, who rules the State, and by Ludovic that the exclusively Ducal prerogatives are

[1] Corio, *Storia di Milano*, ed. de Magri, vol. iii, pp. 458–9 and 506–7. The letter may have been composed by the historian, but it may be quoted as representing the sentiments, if not the actual language, of its supposed author. Achille Dina, in a recent article, 'Isabella d'Aragona Duchessa di Milano e di Bari', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series V, Anno XLVIII (1921), pp. 336–7, pronounces in favour of the genuineness of the letter: the text given by Corio is in Latin, whereas, if he had invented it, it would have been in Italian; and Paolo Giovio says explicitly that the letter was entrusted to a faithful servant, who carried it to Naples.

exercised. Recently he became the father of a son, upon whom, as is generally supposed, he intends to confer the County of Pavia, that he may make him his successor in the Duchy. Meanwhile, he pays as much honour to the child's mother as if she were the Duchess, while we and our children are disdained, and live in peril of our lives. The people bear us a compassionate love, and loathe and detest our tyrant, by whose avarice they are bled white ; but these sentiments are powerless against him, and, surrounded as I am by his hired ruffians, I must perforce swallow affronts and hold my peace. If pity can move you at all, if you have for me one particle of love, if tears can touch you or your heart respond to one generous impulse, then rescue your children from this dire servitude, from insult, perhaps from death, and restore them to the throne. Should you not help us, it were better for me to end my life by my own hands than to bear the yoke of this tyranny, better to suffer any hardship in another kingdom sooner than in my own to be treated thus, and that under a rival's gaze.'

The appeal served only to widen the breach between Ludovic and the Neapolitan Government without bringing comfort to the suppliant. The piteous suit, by which a gentler temper might have been stirred to indignation, goaded into fury the haughty and fiery Alfonso, and high-born Milanese exiles in Ferrante's Court began to hope that the moment had come for the open rupture which was to bring them their revenge upon Ludovic. But Ferrante, who had grown cautious as he grew old, restrained this warlike ardour, and counselled diplomatic remonstrance in preference to an appeal to arms. His envoys were received in Milan with politeness, but dismissed without satisfaction. Ludovic assured them that his one desire was to make his nephew safe and great, but there were still enemies who threatened, and he could not yet desert his post : for Gian Galeazzo all honours were reserved, but the care of the State he must keep in his own hands. With this reply Alfonso must content himself, and Ludovic knew well enough that it would content him but little. It irritated the Regent that the arrogant relatives of the querulous young Duchess should venture to criticize his conduct, and suggest the surrender of his authority into the nerveless

hands of his incapable ward. It was no secret, said the Florentine ambassador, that Ludovic was as badly disposed as could be towards King Ferrante and Duke Alfonso, of whom he habitually spoke as being traitors or something worse. This animosity the ambassador believed to be brought about by the reports which Isabella sent to Naples, and by the consequent fears of Ludovic lest Ferrante should try to evict him from his position; every day fuel was added to the fire, and things were reported which fanned it into a flame; Ferrante had betrayed him in coming to a private understanding with the Pope, having first embroiled him with His Holiness to suit his own private ends, and then having left him in the lurch, to bear the brunt of the Pope's animosity.[1]

And then, during this state of tension, the ineptitude of the vain and feckless Piero de' Medici occasioned an incident which turned the wrath of Ludovic into anxious apprehension. It was Ludovic's great regret that he was a sort of parvenu among Italian rulers; he reflected with mortification upon the spuriousness of his dignities; and to obtain some public recognition of his position was one of the dearest wishes of his heart. In the acts of homage which in the autumn of 1492 Italy was about to render to the new Pope, Alexander VI, Ludovic thought that he might at last find an opportunity to achieve his purpose. Ostensibly that Italy might give to the world an unmistakable demonstration of its unity, but really that he might pose as the friend and equal of Italian Princes, Ludovic proposed that the embassies of the League should unite in a corporate act of obedience to the new Pontiff, and that the representatives of Naples should speak in the name of all. In this proposal King Ferrante concurred: being aware of that which was brewing beyond the Alps, he could not afford either to deepen Ludovic's resentment or to put any obstacle in the way of an exhibition of Italian unity. He accordingly signified to Milan his willingness to participate in the proposed demonstration. But he had

[1] Agnolo Niccolini, Florentine ambassador at Milan, to Piero de' Medici, 7th May 1492; Canestrini et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane*, vol. i, pp. 533–4. Cf. Rosmini, *Dell' Istoria . . . di Gian-Jacopo Trivulzio*, vol. ii, pp. 192–3.

not reckoned with his Florentine ally. Piero de' Medici was to go to Rome as one of the representatives of his city; he did not care to play a subordinate part in a joint ceremony, when an individual rendering of obedience would enable him to parade his charms in solitary magnificence; and he was encouraged by his colleague, Gentile Becchi, who looked forward to the occasion as a supreme moment for the display of his oratorical powers. Piero, therefore, told Ferrante that he could not accept the Milanese proposal, and Ferrante, in withdrawing his own consent, was careful to make it plain to Ludovic that he was acting solely out of deference to the expressed desires of Florence.[1] This incident, trivial enough in itself, became invested with importance by the interpretation which Ludovic placed upon it. He saw in it a clear proof of the way in which Florence and Naples had come together to his own detriment, and in the kaleidoscope of Italian politics he thought to detect the shadow of his coming isolation.

To prevent this catastrophe Ludovic went over to the other camp, and in April 1493 Milan entered into a league with the Pope, Venice, Ferrara, Siena, and Mantua. But the new orientation of his policy brought to Ludovic no repose of mind. He could place no confidence in his new allies, and he was assured of the enmity of his old ones. He knew himself to be hated at home by the subjects whom he over-taxed and to be detested abroad by the Princes who envied him his prosperity. He was menaced by domestic discontent, by the ambition of Venice, by the suspicion of Florence, by the hatred of Alfonso, whose daughter he had abased, and by the restless disposition of the young French King, whose intervention in the affairs of Italy was known to be impending, and was all the more terrible to Ludovic in that France had her own claims to the Duchy which he ruled. A desperate situation seemed to demand desperate measures, and such measures Ludovic took. He followed up the friendly relations with France which had originated in his request for the investiture of Genoa, and egged Charles on to enforce his Neapolitan claims. By these means he hoped to achieve a twofold object—on the one hand, to divert French attention from the

[1] Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, vol. ii, part i, pp. 145, 160–1, and 197–9.

Visconti inheritance, and, on the other, to gain an ally who should be peculiarly dangerous to his own most deadly foe. The apologists of Ludovic assert that he had no real intention of bringing the French into Italy, and that may not improbably be true. He may have thought that Charles' project of distant conquest was an impracticable vision; he may never have expected to see French armies upon Italian soil; he may have supposed that he could utilize a foolish sovereign and his venal advisers just so far as might suit his own ends, and that a pretended concurrence in their schemes would enable him to hold the might of France *in terrorem* over his Italian enemies. But a man must be judged by the consequences of his acts, and to plead miscalculation is no defence. The intrigues and the gold of Ludovic contributed materially to the realization of King Charles' Neapolitan designs. In thinking that he could control events Ludovic over-estimated his power, and the would-be pilot was soon to be dragged helplessly along in the wake of a mighty vessel which sailed where it pleased. With all his cleverness he had forgotten a piece of political wisdom which inspired the actions of more prudent statesmen. 'When disturbances and wars come', wrote the dying Ferrante, 'distress and danger are the lot of all, for when fire has once been kindled and grown into a conflagration, it spreads to places where it is neither expected nor feared; and it has often happened that he has been the first to suffer who thought that he would merely fill the spectator's rôle.' [1]

The wicked but wise old King who wrote those words had long watched the machinations of Ludovic with an increasing anxiety for their probable effects; and at the time of the formation of the League of Venice he had sent to his ambassador in Milan a reasoned condemnation of the Regent's inconstancy and self-seeking. 'We have received news of the League', he wrote. 'I do not see that any event

[1] 'Quando le cose se turbeno, et se venga ali inconvenienti de guerra, po essere certa sua Sta. che essa non porra starne con piace, et che molestie, affanni, et periculi correranno per tutti, et quando lo foco e acceso, e deventato incendio, salta in loco dove non e timuto ne estimato: et multe fiate se e viduto che quillo el quale se ha pensato havere da starse ad videre, poi in facto e stato deli primi ad dolerse': Ferrante to Luigi de Paladinis, 6th January 1494; Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, vol. ii, part ii, p. 395.

has occurred in Italy to justify any potentate in conceiving suspicions as to his position or in seeking novel policies and alliances. Such novelties are undesirable and dangerous. In days past we ourselves had our differences with Pope Innocent, but we composed them without ever forming, or threatening to form, any league. Tell the Duke of Bari in polite and fatherly language that we like not his new league, which is evidence of insincerity and ill feeling on his part; and if he plead that it is made in defence of the Pope, ask him what dangers the Pope runs either in Italy or beyond. Those stand in no need of protection who for years have been the aggressors, and from whose innate ambition we and others in Italy have suffered. Moreover, if the authority of the Holy See be in any need of bolstering up, the right way to do it would be by a general league of Princes. The cautious, clever, and experienced Duke should have foreseen the consequences of his action, and should have realized that others will not look on with folded hands when they see these new raisings of troops, these movements of men over Italy, and all these goings-on upon both sides of the Alps. It is old friendships that are good, stable, and durable, and we do not see how the Duke could honestly or usefully depart from them, and in particular from the proved loyalty and friendship of the exalted Florentine Republic, long experienced to their comfort by his progenitors. He ought, too, to weigh well the possible consequences of disturbances in Italy and disunion between her States, and to consider that he who first raises the tempest cannot always command a calm at his desire. From the past may be learnt how often Ultramontane powers have been summoned to Italy by her internal dissensions, and then have oppressed and tyrannized over her in such a way that the effects may still be seen. The political situation of Italy is such that Ludovic may be the cause of grave misfortunes; and when divisions come, he cannot stand aside from them; nor will it then avail to say, "I did not think of this or expect the other." As allies, friends, and relatives, our conduct has been irreproachable; we are bound to him by our grand-daughter's marriage; and between his House and ours there has been a reciprocal exchange of many and important benefits. We are unable

to see either that necessity compelled, or that a regard for utility and honour can have allowed, a severance of this connexion with its sacred bonds. Ludovic takes on his shoulders a great burden, and he does so without any pressing need, and without pausing to consider whether the road over which the burden has to be borne may not prove to be rough and perilous rather than smooth and safe.' [1]

Whilst the future was to fulfil Ferrante's predictions, the past and present justified his strictures upon the character and conduct of the Milanese Regent. Ludovic il Moro was a strange product of a remarkable age. At the time when he first makes his appearance in these pages he was forty years of age. Known generally as Il Moro by reason of his black hair, dark eyes, and sallow complexion, he was the third son of Francesco Sforza by his marriage with the illegitimate daughter of the last Visconti Duke; and his mother, Bianca Visconti, the remarkable woman who had superintended his education, had acted upon the principle that her business in life was, not to teach men of letters, but to rear princes. Ludovic had therefore spent much of his youth in the open air; he had been trained in athletic accomplishments, he had learnt to ride and to tilt, he had hunted and hawked. But the training of his mental powers had not been neglected, and those powers were of no ordinary kind. There was scarcely an aspect of the brilliant intellectual life of his age which he was unable to comprehend, and Leonardo da Vinci and Bramante were but the most remarkable figures in a dazzling coterie of talent which lent supreme distinction to his Court and revealed the wide embrace of his enlightened patronage. But if he resembled his father in being a man of genius, it was genius of a different quality. A *condottiere* and the child of *condottieri*, Francesco was essentially a man of action. The product of a more peaceful and cultured age, Ludovic was versed in the arts of diplomacy, and shone in the arts of peace. 'In diplomacy, in intrigues, in schemes for the development of his dominions, or, to put it briefly, in all that concerned the intellect alone, Lodovico had few

[1] Ferrante to Antonio de Gennaro, his ambassador in Milan, 24th April 1493; Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, vol. ii, part i, pp. 376–81.

rivals.'[1] But his genius was marred by disabling defects of mind and character; his mind lacked order, and his character lacked firmness. A shrewd observer who had studied him with the keen attention of self-interest declared that 'the Duke of Bari has often shown himself to be fickle, and he never adheres to one design'.[2] 'Ludovic,' said another critic,[3] 'and I speak of him as one with whom I am well acquainted and have had many dealings, is a man of great prudence, but he is very timorous, very supple when afraid, and without respect for his plighted word when he sees advantage in breaking it.' He was 'never able to overcome the moral cowardice which rendered his brilliant intellectual qualities useless at the moment of crisis'.[1] At such a moment a panic terror would seize hold upon him, driving him to surprising lengths of rashness and folly; and so it came about that a man born to adorn the country of his birth became the author and fomentor of that country's most deadly peril.[4]

The States of the Church, which occupied central Italy, were made up of a collection of heterogeneous territories unevenly divided by the mountain range which traversed their midst. They included the March of Ancona, Umbria, Romagna, the Campagna, and a portion of Tuscany. Only Naples could boast of a greater extent of territory, and only Venice possessed a larger population; but though large and populous, the Papal States were far more backward in economic and political development. Economically, they possessed no industry or commerce to compare with that of their neighbours, their one source of strength being an agriculture which allowed of an export trade in grain. Their only other exportable commodity was the raw material of which *condottiere* leaders shaped the instruments that decided Italian quarrels. Politically, their

[1] Mrs. C. M. Ady, *Milan under the Sforzas*, p. 125.

[2] 'Ipso duca de bari como piu volte se e viduto e mutabile, et mai persiste in un medesimo proposito': Ferrante to Berardino de Bernardo, 12th May 1493, Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, vol. ii, part ii, p. 21.

[3] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 117.

[4] 'Huomo di singolar prudenza, ma di profonda ambitione, nato per la ruina d'Italia': Paolo Giovio, *Istorie del suo Tempo*, Prima Parte, trans. L. Domenichi (1555), p. 10.

condition was one of chaos slowly resolving itself into a semblance of order and cohesion. The temporal power of the Papacy had existed for centuries, and there was nothing new in the desire of Popes to create a temporal principality upon the lines of the secular States around them. But at the end of the fifteenth century that desire was but partially fulfilled. In the days of its weakness the Papacy had been forced to yield up some of its possessions to stronger neighbours, and it was still far removed from the enjoyment of a real authority in those which it retained. Throughout the Papal States, and more especially in the districts remote from the capital, *condottiere* leaders, civic officials, and local magnates had availed themselves of a lax authority to set up petty principalities bound to the Papacy by nothing more substantial than the worthless ties of a nominal suzerainty. Such were the Montefeltri at Urbino, the Bentivogli at Bologna, the Malatestas at Rimini, the Baglioni at Perugia, the Manfredi at Faenza, the Sforzas at Pesaro, and the Vitelli at Città di Castello. Nor were conditions much better even in the capital and its immediate neighbourhood. In the Campagna the great baronial families, the Orsini and Colonnas, the Savelli, Conti, and Gaetani, carried on their ' traditional game of irresponsible warfare ', and in the intervals of that game they were quite prepared to fight the Pope at the bidding of any one who could make it worth their while. Even in Rome itself they could defy Papal authority in their fortified castles garrisoned by lawless adherents, and the Head of Christendom knew what it was to tremble in his own palace at the menace of their violent power. ' The papal conclave, civic order, the security of life and property throughout the Patrimony, were . . . at the mercy of the great lords. A foreign invader could count upon the adhesion of one party or the other until from the opposite quarter came the offer of better terms. . . . The papal state was the last stronghold of feudal tyranny in Italy '.[1]

The reduction of this stronghold became the great object of Papal policy when Sixtus IV ascended the Papal Chair. Sixtus set himself to weld into an effective instrument of political power the fragments of sovereignty which

[1] W. H. Woodward, *Cesare Borgia, A Biography* (London, 1913), p. 96.

lay scattered about his throne. To secure the assistance which was essential to the execution of his schemes, he invented a new system for extending Papal authority. 'He elevated nepotism into a political principle. . . . Other Popes had been nepotists a little, but to Sixtus IV nepotism stood in the first place. . . . Sixtus disregarded all considerations of decorum; he took his nephews, men of no position and little capacity, and placed at their disposal all the resources of the Roman See. They were to be magnificent puppets on the stage of Italian politics, moved by the Pope's hand, executing the Pope's schemes, and bringing back their spoils to the Pope's feet.' [1] Two youths, Giuliano della Rovere and Piero Riario, were raised to the Cardinalate and laden with preferments. Another, Leonardo della Rovere, was made Prefect of Rome and married to an illegitimate daughter of King Ferrante, the honour of this connexion being purchased by the surrender of the yearly tribute money of the Neapolitan fief. The hand of another bastard scion of Princes was secured for a fourth nephew, Girolamo Riario, who became the husband of Caterina Sforza and lord of Imola. 'Sixtus IV inaugurated a period of secularization of the Papacy which continued till the shock of the Reformation startled it again into spiritual activity. Under Sixtus IV the Papacy became an Italian power, which pursued its own political career with dexterity and force. What Sixtus IV began Alexander VI continued, and Julius II brought to a successful issue. The Papal States were won.' [2]

In this work of territorial consolidation the Popes were greatly assisted by the characteristic which made them unique among rulers. The spiritual character of the Pope conferred upon him an advantage of inestimable value in the conduct of his temporal affairs. In that character he was unaffected by the changes and chances of mortal life. A Pope might die, but the Papacy was immortal. The States of the Church might lie at the mercy of a conqueror, but their lord was still strong in a sanctity that inspired awe in the most profane, and terrible in his command of weapons that the most daring hesitated to

[1] Creighton, *History of the Papacy*, vol. iii, pp. 62–3.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

encounter. The conscience of Christendom would not permit a Pontiff to be forcibly deposed, like a Sforza or a Medici, or his dominions to be appropriated, like those of a Neapolitan King. Against him alone in Italy the fierce waters of foreign inundations would beat in vain. He alone would stand secure amid the clash of empires and the fall of thrones.[1]

In the politics of Italy the Popes played a part which differed neither for better nor for worse from that of other rulers in the peninsula, whose object was aggrandizement, and whose methods were founded upon force and fraud. The Papacy joined in insincere alliances and waged selfish wars: it would be now the friend and now the foe of Florence or Venice or Milan. But it was in its relation to Naples that its chief political interest was to be sought, since it was in Naples that it found its nearest neighbour, and might look either for a useful friend or for a formidable foe. Since Naples was a fief of the Church, no sovereign could rule there by a legal title unless he had first secured a Papal investiture, and the right to confer this investiture was a powerful weapon in the Pope's hands. The character of the Neapolitan sovereign mattered profoundly to the ruler of the States of the Church. On the one hand, he must not be weak and incapable, or he would deprive the Papacy of its chief bulwark against Ottoman attacks. But neither, on the other hand, must he be too strong, lest he should terrorize his suzerain. The borders of the Kingdom of Naples were not far removed from Rome itself; its Kings were well placed to ally themselves with the great families which contended for the mastery of the Campagna; and it was easy for Neapolitan armies to deploy beneath the walls of Rome and for Neapolitan fleets to cut her sea communications. The political situation of the Papacy will therefore be studied most conveniently in connexion with that of the Kingdom of Naples, of which we must first take a cursory survey.

The Kingdom of Naples—*il Regno*, as the Italians called it—differed essentially from all the other States of Italy,

[1] See Fueter, *Geschichte des Staatensystems*, and compare the famous passage in Macaulay's essay on Ranke's *History of the Popes*.

where the prevalent type was a city growing rich upon industry and commerce, and extending its dominion over neighbouring towns similar to, but weaker than, itself. In the city state the polity might remain a republic, as at Venice; or it might become an autocracy, as at Milan; or, as at Florence, there might be a compromise between these forms of government, and a semblance of freedom might be preserved under the reality of despotism. Geographically, politically, economically, socially, Naples belonged to an entirely different order of evolution, being more akin to the monarchies of the North, and especially to France, a branch of whose Royal House had wielded the regal authority within its confines for close upon two hundred years. Geographically, the kingdom was a real country, and no mere city state; its territory stretched from the Adriatic to the Tyrrhenian Sea and from the vicinity of Rome to the extreme southern limits of the peninsula; it embraced wide districts, such as the Abruzzi, the Terra di Lavoro, the Basilicate, and the Capitanate; and it possessed an extensive seaboard. Politically, it was a product of the feudalism which its Norman masters had imposed upon their conquest; here, as in France, were the feudal system of land tenure and the great baronial Houses to which that system gave rise; here were the provincial magnates, residing in and ruling over their principalities, strong in the strength of their own resources, and owning but a frail allegiance to their overlord, the King; and here, too, as in the France of Louis XI and Anne de Beaujeu, were the conflict between feudalism and the Crown, the collision of the provincial and the monarchical spirits, the losing battle of local independence with the advancing forces of a centralized authority. Economically, the kingdom bore no resemblance to the commercial communities of northern Italy: its wealth was agricultural and pastoral; industry languished; little use was made of maritime advantages; trade was in foreign hands; and if there were some wealthy citizens enriched by commerce, yet there was not a vestige of the burgher class upon which the city state was built. Socially, the structure of the kingdom was such as resulted from these conditions; an ancient monarchy, different in origin, in

character, and in attributes from the *condottiere* despotism, ruled over an aristocratic society founded upon the land.

Half a century had passed since this great kingdom had come by right of sword to the Royal House of Aragon. Alfonso of Aragon conquered Naples in 1442 and died in 1458, leaving his Spanish, Sicilian, and Sardinian possessions to his brother, and his Neapolitan prize to his bastard, Ferrante. If there was something in the Kingdom of Naples which recalled France, there was much in its new ruler which brought to mind Louis XI, of whom Ferrante seemed to be a fantastic parody or caricature. Like Louis, Ferrante combined consummate political prudence with perfidious cunning, a calculated cruelty, the instincts of a common trickster, and the tastes of a tyrant. By these qualities, and without any aid from courage or martial skill, gifts which he did not possess, he had weathered every storm, got the better of all his rivals, triumphed over all opposition, and for nearly forty years held a usurped throne in the teeth of universal execration. Like Louis, he had managed to injure every interest and offend every class; but where Louis chastised with whips, Ferrante chastised with scorpions. His intolerable exactions and iniquitous monopolies impoverished the whole of his kingdom, bringing ruin to many trades and famine to countless homes. He was the perfect type of the profiteer. His system was as simple as it was dishonest, and as lucrative as it was simple: he would fix the price of corn or oil or wine at a sum which barely sufficed to defray the cost of production, decree to himself the sole right to purchase the commodity at the price fixed, and then secure a fabulous profit by unloading his monopolistic stocks at famine prices. Exactions and monopolies brought him wealth; wealth meant power; and power meant the suppression of the great and the oppression of the humble. No man in Naples was safe in person or in property. All longed in secret for the end of an intolerable misery. But they longed as men without hope, for there was one in their midst more wicked, cruel, treacherous, and tyrannical than Ferrante, and that one was Alfonso, his son and heir, who would succeed to a power which already he largely shared.

The Neapolitan barons had long resented Ferrante's

insidious attacks upon their privileges, when a peculiarly flagrant instance of Alfonso's perfidy fanned into a flame the smouldering embers of their discontent. The town of Aquila in the Abruzzi was ruled by Pietro Camponischi, a member of an Angevin family, whose support Ferrante had hoped to win by the gift of the County of Montorio. In June 1485 Alfonso, who distrusted him, invited him to attend a conference of lords at Chieti, and upon his arrival seized his person and threw a body of men into the citadel of Aquila. In October the people of Aquila rose against Alfonso, slew his officers, expelled his garrison, and hoisted the banner of the Church over their city.

The revolt of Aquila was the signal for a long-contemplated outbreak. The malcontent barons had met at Melfi: at their head were the Prince of Altamura, Grand Constable of Naples; Antonello di San Severino, Prince of Salerno, the Admiral; his kinsman, the Prince of Bisignano, Grand Chamberlain; the Marquis del Vasto, Grand Seneschal; and Giovanni della Rovere, Prefect of Rome, who held the Neapolitan Dukedom of Sora. They were confident of Papal support. Innocent VIII, the recently elected Pope, was known to be Angevin in his sympathies, and to be much influenced by Giuliano della Rovere, the fiery Cardinal of S. Pietro-in-Vincoli, who detested the Aragonese, had a brother among the rebels, and desired to recover for the Church the rights which Sixtus IV had relinquished. The Pope's relations with Naples were already strained. Immediately after his election Alfonso had visited him, to request the surrender of Benevento, Terracina, and Ponte Corvo, in order that these annoying little Papal enclaves might be incorporated in his father's realm. This proposal Innocent had declined. In June 1485 Ferrante by his ambassador had presented a white palfrey as a token of his feudal dependence, at the same time soliciting a continued exemption from the tribute which Innocent's predecessor had remitted. Once more the Pope refused his request, demanding payment of the tribute; and Ferrante had retorted by denying to the Pope the exercise of his spiritual rights in Naples. Rebellious subjects of Ferrante might feel assured of Papal protection.

It was soon seen that that protection would be a poor defence. Milan, Florence, and Virginio Orsini declared for Ferrante, and Alfonso, entering the Campagna to join hands with Orsini, carried his raids up to the gates of Rome. The Pope's allies, Venice, Genoa, and the Colonnas, did little to help him. Venice did not want to be drawn into a serious entanglement, and her sole contribution to the Pope's defence was to set free for his service her general, Roberto di San Severino, a leader as deficient in capacity as his troops were lacking in discipline. Innocent decided to resort to the favourite device of every enemy of the Aragonese, and to put an Angevin claimant into the field. But here again fortune failed him; Anne de Beaujeu was too much occupied with the internal affairs of France to run after distant adventure; and René of Lorraine received from her little more than platonic support. Before René was in a position to grasp it, his chance was gone. In May 1486 Alfonso fought a battle, of which the issue was favourable to him, and again approached Rome, whence he had retired on the advent of San Severino. The Campagna was overrun, and all supplies were cut off from the capital, which was speedily reduced to great straits. The Pope had neither troops nor money, distrusted his general, and despaired of his allies. His energetic lieutenant, della Rovere, was no longer at his side, for he had gone to fetch the Angevin claimant; and René had not come. Umbria was disaffected. The whole edifice of the temporal power seemed to be endangered. Innocent could no longer resist the desire for peace which the fear of French intervention had everywhere engendered. Cardinal Borgia, the Vice-Chancellor, who was the spokesman of Spain, and Ascanio Sforza, the brother and spokesman of Ludovic il Moro, concurred in offering pacific counsel. In August Innocent agreed to accept the terms proposed by Ferrante, who had his own reasons for desiring the termination of a quarrel which might bring the French upon the scene. The King of Naples was to acknowledge himself to be a vassal of the Church, and to render the customary tribute; Aquila was to be left at liberty to chose between the contending parties; the Neapolitan barons were to return to their allegiance under

guarantees of forgiveness; and Virginio Orsini was to lay his humble apologies at the feet of his Holiness. Ferdinand of Aragon, Florence, and Milan became guarantors of the treaty.

The pact was not so much as proclaimed when the King of Naples violated it. Aquila, which he could not afford to give up, because it commanded an important military route into his dominions, was seized by his troops, and the Papal Governor was put to death. The tribute, which he had covenanted to pay, was withheld, and the benefices, which he had agreed to leave at the Pope's disposal, were filled in the Pope's despite. The Pope's general, San Severino, was pursued by Alfonso, and escaped with difficulty into Venetian territory. The armed bands of the Orsini continued to terrorize the Campagna. The barons who had submitted in reliance upon the pledges of Ferrante and the guarantee of the powers, were decoyed by a ruse into the King's clutches, and thrown into jail. Within a year four of them were publicly executed, and one was privately assassinated. The leaders of the House of San Severino, the Princes of Altamura and Bisignano, who had headed the rebellion, and a large number of their relatives and supporters were left to languish in the dungeons of the Castel Nuovo at Naples until a pretext for putting them out of the way should be invented; and on Christmas Day, 1491, a day of storm and tempest that matched the blackness of the deeds it was to behold, a wholesale massacre relieved Ferrante of his unwelcome and unwilling guests.[1]

Nothing but the weakness of Innocent prevented a renewal of hostilities. In September 1489 Ferrante was excommunicated for his shameless breaches of faith, and it was publicly declared in Consistory that the Neapolitan fief was forfeit to the Church. In the meantime Innocent, who was negotiating with France for the surrender of

[1] 'Anno domini MCCCCLXXXXI indie natiuitatis domini nostri Iesu Christi XXV decembris de martedi in la Cita de Napoli fo tale temporale si detempesta de venti depogi de grandene che tucta la nocte non fe may altro et publicamente si diceua che quella nocte li baruni del regno quali stauano carcerati inlo castello nouo erano stati amazarati inmari, li nomi delliquali baruni rebelli foro quisti videlicet—': Notaro Giacomo, *Cronica di Napoli*, ed. P. Garzilli (Naples, 1845), p. 171.

Djem, the Turkish Prince, endeavoured once more to bring forward René of Lorraine as a candidate, or, better still, to put the King of France himself in motion against the Aragonese usurper. As before, the French menace inspired a new energy in the peace-makers, and Lorenzo de' Medici brought his moderating influence to bear upon the disputants, persuading them that in the event of intervention by a great power the one would stand to gain nothing and the other to lose all. Thus in January 1492 another reconciliation was effected between Innocent and Ferrante, destined upon this occasion to be more fruitful in the works of friendship. The King of Naples was to pay his tribute, and was to receive in return a formal investiture for himself, his son, and his grandson of the fief which had been declared forfeit in 1489. To turn Innocent from his French policy and attach him to his cause, Ferrante also consented to a marriage between his grandson and the Pope's grand-daughter. In January a treaty was signed; in May Alfonso's son, Ferrantino, Prince of Capua, paid a state visit to Rome; and in June the Pope, ignoring the protests of Charles VIII's representatives, issued his Bull conferring Naples upon Ferrante and his heirs. Scarcely were the rejoicings over when Innocent died, thus, as Guicciardini contemptuously commented, terminating a life which, if in other respects useless, was at least useful in this, that since his fruitless efforts in the Barons' War he had given up war for pleasure and done nothing further to disturb the peace of Italy.

The somewhat hesitating advances of Innocent were not the only call which the Barons' War brought to Charles VIII to interest himself in the affairs of Italy. Some of Ferrante's rebel lords, the Prince of Salerno among them, had known better than to trust their lives to the tender mercies of a perfidious tyrant. 'The Prince of Salerno escaped, not wishing to be comprised in the bargain, for he knew King Ferrante. . . . With three of his nephews, sons of the Prince of Bisignano, he went to Venice, where he had many friends, and sought the advice of the Signory whether to turn to the Duke of Lorraine or to the King of France or to the King of Spain. They told him that the Duke of Lorraine was too feeble to be of service; the King of

Spain would become over-mighty, if to Sicily and his other possessions in the Gulf of Lyons and to his sea-power he were to add the kingdom of Naples; and they therefore advised him to go to France, whose Kings had ever been their good friends and neighbours, and from whom they looked not at all for that which was to come. Thus these barons came to France, and were well received, but shabbily treated. For two years or thereabouts they urged their matter vigorously, addressing themselves in everything to Estienne de Vers, Seneschal of Beaucaire, one of the King's Chamberlains, and living from day to day in alternations of hope and despair.' [1] Thus another voice was added to the chorus of solicitation which sounded in the attentive ears of Charles, a voice vibrant with that infectious enthusiasm of the exile, who fires the minds of others by his own impassioned conviction that the chief care of Providence is to restore him to his home.

Innocent was buried on 6th August, and in the evening of that day the Cardinals present in Rome withdrew into Conclave for the election of his successor. In the condition of secularization to which the Papacy was reduced political ability and experience were regarded as much weightier qualifications for the Papal Chair than spiritual gifts or personal sanctity, and from this point of view the outstanding candidates were Roderigo Borgia, the Vice-Chancellor, a nephew of Calixtus III, Giuliano della Rovere, a nephew of Sixtus IV, and Ascanio Sforza, the brother of Ludovic il Moro. The King of France desired the election of della Rovere, who had signalized himself by his enmity to Naples. The King of Spain favoured the election of Borgia, who was a Spaniard, and had shown himself to be sympathetic to Spanish aspirations. It soon became obvious to Ascanio that he could not win the prize for himself, and, failing that, his main preoccupation was to ensure that it should not fall to his hated rival, della Rovere. Ascanio therefore threw his considerable influence into a scale which was already heavily weighted in favour of Borgia by the influence of the Spanish monarch, by the general fear of creating a Pope who should be in the French interest, and by the enticement of the vast wealth and fat

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. Mandrot, vol. ii, pp. 107–8.

preferments with which Borgia himself was able to make a bid for support. Borgia set himself to win votes by simony naked and unabashed. His splendid palace with all its rich contents he promised to Ascanio, together with the reversion of his Vice-Chancellorship; the Bishopric of Pampeluna secured the support of one Cardinal, the See of Porto won over another; other electors yielded to the temptation of other preferments; and by 10th August the election of Borgia was secured.

At the instance of an impartial scholarship history has revised its estimate of Roderigo Borgia, who no longer figures in its pages as the legendary monster of iniquity whom a shocked world once denounced with unmeasured indignation. But no leniency of appreciation should be permitted to obscure the fact that the startling methods by which his elevation had been procured, and the yet more startling contrast between his moral depravity and the high claims of his spiritual office, explained and justified some severity of judgement. 'In Alexander VI (so the new Pontiff chose to be called)', said Guicciardini, 'were singular industry and sagacity, sound judgement, wonderful persuasiveness, extraordinary dexterity and application in business; but his virtues were far surpassed by his vices; morally, he was most depraved; he had neither sincerity, nor shame, nor truth, nor faith, nor religious feeling; his avarice was insatiable, his ambition immoderate, his cruelty more than barbarous; and he would stick at nothing in his burning desire to advance his many sons.'[1] If a criticism so harsh cannot now be accepted without qualification, it would not at the time of Alexander's election have found acceptance at all. When its choice was announced, it was generally considered that the College had acquitted itself in a most proper and prudent manner. It was known that the Pontiff had bought votes, but he had only done the usual thing on a scale of somewhat unusual magnificence. It was known that the four children borne to him by a former mistress, Vanozza dei Catanei, did not exhaust the list of his bastard offspring, whilst his existing relations with the lovely Giulia Farnese were notorious; but such trifles did not much surprise or shock

[1] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 8.

a world which had grown accustomed to the secularization of great spiritual offices, and would not refuse to a Prince of the Church the indulgence which it extended to temporal magnates. In other respects Borgia seemed well fitted for high station by his proved possession of many useful qualities. A Cardinal at the age of twenty-eight and for many years Vice-Chancellor, he had attended assiduously to the duties of his office, and had served successive Pontiffs with zeal, ability, and discretion. With great physical strength and unusual powers of endurance he combined business capacity, experience of affairs, a valuable knowledge of ecclesiastical law and custom, and the unscrupulous adroitness in politics which Italy expected in her statesmen. He was personally attractive, dignified in his bearing, gracious in his manner, kind-hearted and benevolent by disposition. Moreover, he knew—and the knowledge would be invaluable to a master of the Vatican—how to achieve magnificence without running into extravagance or permitting prodigality. Such was Pope Alexander VI, a man who, but for the ill fortune which had given him Cesare Borgia for a son, might have lived a different life, and left a brighter fame.

For the new Pontiff, as for other Popes of the period, the question of the greatest moment was that of the policy to be adopted towards Naples. Was he to revive the hostility of his predecessor's early days, or to continue the friendship of his latter end ? Ferrante did his best to ensure that the choice should be pacific, and sent to Rome his second son, Don Federigo, who was as gracious and benign as the elder was haughty and repellent. The visitor could not congratulate himself upon the friendliness of his reception. In the first flush of his new greatness Alexander could scarcely go against the man to whom his elevation was mainly due, and a becoming gratitude to Ascanio Sforza entailed the predominance of Milanese influence in the counsels of the Vatican. That influence was exerted all the more strenuously to prevent a *rapprochement* between Naples and the Papacy in that this was the time of Piero de' Medici's ill-timed display of Aragonese sympathies and his ill-omened refusal to co-operate in a joint rendering of obedience to the Pontiff. An event soon happened which

Ascanio could easily twist to Ferrante's disadvantage in the mind of the Pope. A son of the late Pope, Franceschetto Cibo, had been invested by Innocent with Anguillara, Cervetri, and some smaller places in the Roman Campagna. Upon his father's death he retired to Florence, and either because he preferred a life of ease to the turbulent existence of a Roman baron, or because he thought it prudent to dispose advantageously of that which he had small chance of retaining, he sold his fiefs for 40,000 ducats to Virginio Orsini. It was generally assumed that this transaction had been engineered by Piero de' Medici and Ferrante, who were believed to have supplied the cash; and whilst it strengthened the suspicion and alarm of Ludovic, it was almost as unacceptable to the Pope, whose consent had not been asked for, and who could not view with complacency the spread of Neapolitan influence in the Campagna or an extension of the power of the factious baron who was a relative of the Florentine ruler and the staunch henchman of the Neapolitan.

Ferrante did what he could to preserve the peace of Italy, and presently he had the satisfaction of finding that a change was coming over the sentiments of Alexander VI. The support of Milan had not brought much comfort to the mind of His Holiness: Ludovic had, indeed, negotiated a league between the Papacy, Milan, Venice, Ferrara, Siena, and Mantua; but he himself was gravitating ever more rapidly towards France; Venice was unreliable; and the Pope had his own anxieties. With the fiery Cardinal of S. Pietro-in-Vincoli withdrawn to his fortress at Ostia in dudgeon at the rôle assigned to his rival, Ascanio, with the Orsini quarrel uncomposed, and with armed bands patrolling the Campagna, Alexander could not run the risk of a breach with Naples. Accordingly, when in June 1493 Don Federigo paid a second visit to Rome, he found the Pope in a more conciliatory temper. Naples and the Papacy were once more to be united by a family alliance, Don Gioffredo, the bastard son of Alexander, being affianced to Sancia, the natural daughter of Alfonso; Naples and Florence were to be explicitly placed under Papal protection; Virginio was to keep his castles upon paying the purchase-money over again to Alexander; and

he and della Rovere were to be readmitted to His Holiness' favour. When Perron de Baschi, the envoy of Charles VIII, reached Rome to demand the investiture of Naples for his master, he found that he had come too late: the Pope would have nothing to say to him.

The relief of Ferrante was proportionate to his previous anxiety. 'The illustrious Prince of Altamura has gone to Rome', he told his ambassadors in France on 12th August 1493,[1] 'to settle Signor Virginio Orsini's difference. Thank God, a settlement has been reached; everything has been arranged to His Holiness' satisfaction and ours; and many who cherished evil hopes and aims are disappointed and made to look foolish. Messer Perrone de Becchier was very high-handed with the Supreme Pontiff, who answered him discreetly. He has now gone to Milan, Venice, and Florence. When he returns to France, opinions will undergo a change, for in much that looked so engagingly simple the real difficulties will begin to appear. Be of good courage, therefore, for between the Pope and ourselves the best possible understanding exists and will endure.' A month later, in a dispatch to Luigi de Paladinis, his ambassador at the Papal Court,[2] Ferrante gave still more emphatic expression to his delight. 'It is a common experience', he wrote, 'that in moments of great joy words fail to express our feelings of delight.[3] This has befallen us upon the occasion of the return of the Prince of Altamura and of the report he has given us of His Holiness' wise conduct and affectionate attitude; and truly we are at a loss for words adequate to express our immense satisfaction and our mind's contentment.' 'You are to express our pleasure and sense of obligation to his Holiness', the letter continued, 'for his goodness in composing the difference with Virginio Orsini, which might have given rise to scandals and inconveniences in Italy and beyond it; for the Brief extending Papal protection to Florence and ourselves; for his willingness to marry his son into our

[1] Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, vol. ii, part ii, p. 205.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 244–50.

[3] 'In una leticia grande et cordiale, communemente lanimo se converte tanto ad allegrarse, che manca poi in le parole circa lo explicare de lo suo piacere': *Ibid.*, p. 244.

House; for his readiness to interpose in the matter of the Duke of Bari's jealousies and suspicions, than which nothing could be more advantageous to our State and to Italy in general, and we trust that he will strike while the iron is hot. You will also thank him for his feeling reference to French affairs, for his sincere disposition to safeguard our interests, and for his reply to Perrone, in which he exhibited at once his singular prudence and his affection towards ourselves, without departing at all from that Pontifical dignity which is the foundation of Italian tranquillity and its surest shield against the neighbouring might of the watchful Infidel. The Pope is wise and knows how in these matters it is of importance that he should have regard to the Papacy, to our State, which is as it were his own, to Italy, which at his election he found at peace, to the nature of the Ultramontanes, especially of the French, ever evil disposed towards Italy, when they are at peace at home, and to the power and fury of the Turks, who desire nothing so much as to see Italy involved in war, that they may the more readily occupy it themselves. Let His Holiness recall the insolence of the French in times past and the calamities and oppressions which befell our cities and princes in those days, when with their instinctive hatred of our country they sought to blot out the very name of Italy. The present King is very powerful, is at peace with his neighbours, has joined the great Duchy of Britanny to his own dominions, is young and prosperous, and is incessantly urged on to this enterprise by his courtiers. Weighing well all these things, the Pope should attend sedulously to the preservation of Italian liberty and of the dignity of the Apostolic See, which would perish violently, were the French to gain the mastery in Italy. His Holiness should also reflect that no greater shame or infamy could befall the Apostolic See than for these things to happen in his day, when he was aware of their imminence, and might have provided a remedy.'

The alliance with Alexander VI was the more precious to Ferrante in that it brought a solitary ray of hope to relieve the ever deepening gloom of his declining years. The veteran statesman who had triumphed over so many difficulties was sinking at last beneath the weight of increasing

anxieties and the burden of accumulated cares. The New Year, fraught with its promise of evil to his throne and country, found him still living, but on the 25th January 1494 he went to his reward, and Alfonso, his son, reigned in his stead. The new King had learned prudence since the day when he breathed fire and slaughter against Ludovic and spoiled for a fight with Innocent VIII; his arrogant spirit had learned to quail before the deadly menace of a French attack. Nothing was left undone that a prudent diplomacy might achieve to retain the friendship of the Papacy and to secure from the suzerain of Naples that declaration in favour of the House of Aragon which must prove so formidable an obstacle in the path of King Charles with his Angevin pretensions. In April he secured the end which his submissive attitude was designed to gain. On the 18th of that month, in a tumultuous Consistory, Pope Alexander, ignoring the protests of the opposition Cardinals, the threats and menaces of France, and her blustering talk of a withdrawal of obedience and an appeal to a Council, formally announced his intention of recognizing the right of Alfonso to the Neapolitan Crown. Three weeks later Alfonso's coronation ceremony was solemnized by the Papal Legate.

These events added one more voice, and that no feeble one, to the chorus which called from Italy for the coming of the French King. The apparent reconciliation between the Pope and Cardinal della Rovere had been insincere, and was of short duration. Disliking the Pope's policy and distrusting his intentions, the Cardinal soon retired again to his fortress see at Ostia, and there allied himself with his Colonna and Savelli neighbours, who were the natural enemies of the Vatican. But no alliance with local barons could make him feel secure against the united efforts of Alexander and Alfonso, and both were menaced by his possession of Ostia, which by its command of the mouth of the Tiber controlled the route by which Rome obtained her sea-borne supplies and communicated with her Neapolitan ally. In his anxiety for his own safety, therefore, della Rovere, like Ludovic il Moro, began to consider the advisability of an appeal to Charles VIII. He veiled his intention in the deepest secrecy, and carried it out before

it was suspected. The Signory of Venice, usually so well informed, went on cautioning their ambassadors to avoid entering into relations with him, lest they should give umbrage to the King of France. On 2nd May a Milanese envoy was still speculating upon the possibility of della Rovere allying himself with France, and was trying to estimate the importance of such an event; it must result, he thought, in a powerful weapon being forged against the Pope. At the moment when he was composing his dispatch the event which he regarded as a possibility was in course of accomplishment. On 23rd April the Cardinal suddenly executed the plan upon which he had secretly determined. He slipped quietly out of Ostia, rode overland as far as Cività Vecchia for fear of Alfonso's cruisers, there took ship for Genoa, and thence made his way by Nice and Avignon to Lyons, where the French Court was established. There, as his biographer has expressed it, he began with all the zeal of his fiery temperament to press for the Neapolitan expedition: he knew the hollowness of appearances in Naples, the cowardice of the Italian soldiery, the unreliability of their leaders, the degeneracy of the dynasties and governments which ruled in the peninsula; he knew that in these structures of straw, which naked wickedness had built and the lowest cunning maintained, it was but necessary to apply the match, to kindle an unquenchable flame.[1]

[1] M. Brosch, *Papst Julius II. und die Gründung des Kirchenstaates.*

X

DIPLOMATIC PRELIMINARIES

In January 1492, when Milan had not yet severed its alliance with Naples and Florence, and Lorenzo de' Medici was still alive, a Florentine agent reported to his master that, as far as he could make out, the Milanese Government was engaged in secret activities which boded no good to the peace of Italy. A well-informed friend told him, he said, that the chief men in Milan and Lombardy were continually soliciting the French to go into Italy, with the result that an expedition was being seriously thought of, and had been referred to a committee for consideration.[1] The writer and his friend were, perhaps, wrong in supposing at this time that Ludovic il Moro had really gone to the length of encouraging the Italian ambitions of Charles VIII, but it is certain that in his uneasiness at the hostile attitude of the Aragonese he earnestly desired the friendship of France, whilst the French on their side, confronted by the international crisis that had sprung from the Breton marriage in the previous month, could not afford to be indifferent to the support of Milan. Ever since the time when Milan had applied to France for the investiture of Genoa, Ludovic had desired to renew the league which had bound those States together in the time of Louis XI; and after the Breton marriage and the jilting of Maximilian's daughter he realized that Charles, with a big war in prospect, would be likely to show a greater eagerness for the alliance than he had previously displayed. In this surmise he was correct, and in January 1492 France consented to waive the requirements by her insistence upon which the renewal of the league had been delayed. In the following month Ludovic responded by appointing a splendid embassy to visit the French Court. Ostensibly, the object of the embassy was to offer to Charles the

[1] Cosimo Sassetti, at Tours, to Lorenzo de' Medici: Buser, *Die Beziehungen der Mediceer zu Frankreich*, p. 529.

congratulations of Milan upon the successful issue of the Breton war, her felicitations upon his recent marriage, and her thanks for the investiture of Genoa and the renewal of the league. The real object was to win the support of the French Government for Ludovic himself, and this was to be accomplished in part by a judicious distribution of bribes among the King's favourites and in part by an evident proof of Ludovic's goodwill to France. For this last he relied upon a letter which the King of England had recently addressed to the Government of Milan, and in which he had expressed himself with much less than his usual cautious reticence.

'Were we not of opinion', Henry VII had said,[1] 'that the intense ambition of the French, and their lust for extending their sway and conquering the dominions of others, is manifest to you, we should endeavour to demonstrate it at full length; but we consider the fact so evident that there is no need for further statement; though how much it is our interest, and also of yours, and of the rest of the Christian sovereigns, especially those nearest at hand, to repress such great thirst and desire for domination, we leave to your judgement; for the French are so on the watch to increase their power by any villany, and more and more so from day to day, that they may annihilate all neighbouring sovereigns to their own advantage; and unless this insatiable covetousness be combatted, it is vastly to be feared that much mischief will result to the whole Christian commonwealth. All know by what right they harassed the Duchess and the duchy of Brittany by protracted and grievous war, and have now, at length, reduced both one and the other to their power. The fraud and stratagems employed by them to effect the rebellion of Ghent and many other Flemish towns against the King of the Romans are matters of notoriety, nor is anybody unacquainted with the plots now in preparation by them for the subjection of the whole of Flanders. If we wished, however, to give you examples nearer home, or rather to recall them to your memory, we might show how per-

[1] On 10th January 1492: *Venetian Calendar*, ed. Rawdon Brown, vol. i, pp. 210–11; and cf. *Milanese Calendar*, ed. Allen B. Hinds, vol. i, p. 284.

fidiously they circumvented and supplanted the princes of Savoy, but we think that fact can be no secret to any sovereign in Christendom—to such a degree does this insolent licentiousness spread itself and advance with impunity in every direction. . . . As we are about to undertake a war against these French, together with our confederates the King of the Romans and the King and Queen of Spain, . . . we pray your Highness . . . to adhere to us in this just and necessary war, and to assist us to the utmost, it being your interest to prevent a neighbouring enemy, so covetous of empire that the whole world would not suffice him, from becoming too strong; one, in short, who threatens the duchy of Milan no less than the other principalities of Christendom, and lays claim to that identical duchy for the Duke of Orleans.'

In communicating this letter to the King of France, Ludovic looked for a double effect: the letter would show that the enemies of France valued his support; the communication of it would be convincing evidence of his loyalty to the French; and if he could but secure the goodwill of Charles, he would have done much to protect himself against the hostility of Naples and to render possible his secret design of seizing the Duchy of Milan for himself. 'You will offer to the King', said the official instruction given to the ambassadors in the name of the young Duke,[1] 'our State and all its resources, its men-at-arms, and the person of our most illustrious uncle himself.' What did these words signify? If, as seems possible, they were intended merely as a diplomatic formula of politeness, they were not very happily chosen, for Charles and his favourites, with their minds full of Italy and their ears daily assailed by Neapolitan refugees, would be likely to place their own interpretation upon them, and to construe them as a specific promise of assistance towards the accomplishment of the particular purpose upon which they were bent. The agents of foreign governments, whose business was to find out the secret ends of diplomacy, assumed that the Neapolitan enterprise had been discussed, and that Ludovic had promised the help of Milan. 'Signor Ludovic is doing his best to conclude a

[1] Delaborde, *Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*, p. 237.

special bargain with the King', said Lorenzo Spinelli, who shared with Cosimo Sassetti the double duty of managing the Lyons branch of the Medici Bank and supplying political information to the Florentine Government.[1] 'He wants the King to promise him support against all and sundry; and I understand that he guarantees him some great advantage when this shall have been satisfactorily settled.'

Be this as it may, Ludovic gained his immediate object. His embassy reached the French Court towards the end of March, and in April the Duke of Bari was admitted personally and by name to the league signed at the beginning of the year. The effect upon him was noted with amusement by King Ferrante's envoys, who told their master that he was putting on tremendous airs, and in his new power and grandeur seemed scarcely to know himself.[2] But in the suspicious mind of the craven a momentary exultation is soon displaced by some new anxiety. The passive goodwill of an inactive France began presently to seem to Ludovic an inadequate protection against the dangers by which he was threatened, and the spring of 1493 found him gravitating towards fresh alliances; in April he became the ally of Venice and the Pope, and a few weeks later his wife, Beatrice, was dispatched to assure the Republic of St. Mark of the friendly sentiments of its new ally, and secretly, perhaps, to sound the Signory as to the attitude which it would adopt towards a change of rulers in Milan. Ludovic accompanied his wife upon the first stages of her journey, and had just parted from her, to return home, when information reached him in the light of which he must instantly reconsider his whole position.

When the great Milanese embassy of the previous year completed its business and took its leave of the French Court, one of its members, Carlo di Barbiano, Count of Belgiojoso, remained behind as a resident ambassador. In the first week of June 1493 Belgiojoso returned suddenly

[1] Letter of 15th April 1492: Buser, *op. cit.*, p. 535.

[2] Compare Malipiero, 'Annali Veneti,' in *Arch. Stor. Ital.*, Series I, vol. vii, p. 482: 'El Duca de Milan se gloria de haver addesso un capelan, un conduttier, un camerlengho e un corier, che insieme provede unidamente a i so besogni. El capelan è Papa Alessandro, el conduttier è Massimian, el camerlengho è la Signoria, che dà fuora largamente quanto 'l comette, e 'l corier è 'l Re de Franza, che va e vien a so beneplacito.'

to Italy; he had come from the French Court in seven days, riding at top speed and travelling in secret; and upon learning that Ludovic was absent from Milan, he had avoided the capital, and ridden hurriedly on in search of him. The reason for this haste and stealth, foreign agents in Milan could not guess; they could but report the facts, and leave their Governments to infer that Belgiojoso would not have acted as he had done without some motive of the first importance.

What had happened was this. In May 1493 the King of France, who had already procured peace with England and Spain, was negotiating at Senlis for the termination of hostilities with his last remaining enemy. As soon as it became clear that these negotiations were on the eve of a successful issue, Charles sent for Belgiojoso, and spoke to him openly of his future plans. Now that peace was re-established at home, he meant to recover his Neapolitan kingdom, and looked to Ludovic to play a leading part in that operation, in return for which he would give him a liberal share in the spoils; he was about to send an envoy to Italy, to request the aid of Venice and Florence and the approval of the Pope; and on his way this envoy would visit Milan, to consult with the Regent and obtain the benefit of his counsel. It was to bring this news to the Government which he served that Belgiojoso had dashed back to Italy with something of a spy's furtiveness and with something more than a courier's speed.

When Ludovic had received Belgiojoso's report, he realized that he was face to face with one of the crises of his life: he must make up his mind once and for all what attitude to adopt towards a French invasion of Naples. Many considerations affected the momentous decision, those which most influenced him being the desire for self-preservation and the hope of self-aggrandizement; and it was the utter selfishness of his policy which made a decision so difficult to reach. On the one hand, he had deserted, or been deserted by, his old allies, and could place no dependence upon the friendship of his new ones, whom he knew to be both selfish and insincere; and not only did an active partnership with France seem to promise protection against the most pressing perils, but also in the confusion and

turmoil consequent upon a French invasion an unscrupulous ability could scarcely fail to find the occasion for which it sought. On the other hand, some time must necessarily elapse before the French could come upon the scene, and during that time he would be exposed to the wrath of Naples; report credited the French with an inordinate ambition; the Duke of Orleans, as Belgiojoso told him, was incessantly harping upon his Milanese claims; and horrid fears would assail his timorous and distrustful mind of that which might ensue when French armies should stand in contact with the defenceless wealth of Lombardy.

For this difficulty Ludovic sought to provide a remedy, or at least a palliative, by a characteristic specimen of the intriguer's art. As he had turned to the enemy of Naples for protection against Ferrante and Alfonso, so he now turned to the enemy of France for protection against Charles. In theory, Milan was a fief of the Empire, and an Imperial investiture was necessary to the validity of its ruler's title; but this investiture the Sforzas had never troubled to procure, for a title which their strong right hand had won and could easily maintain seemed to stand in no need of artificial sanctions. To Ludovic, however, the matter presented itself in a different light: if the ruler of Milan were to receive the Imperial investiture, the French could not evict him without calling down upon themselves the wrath of the suzerain whose authority they would have flouted; and if the Sforza Dukes could be regarded technically as usurpers, then the investiture might be requested, not for their natural heir, the reigning Duke, but for Ludovic himself. Indifferent alike to the treacherous betrayal of his ward and to the grievous wrong he did to his father's memory and the whole of his father's House, Ludovic accordingly turned to Maximilian and applied for an Imperial grant, offering as a bait to that impecunious potentate a cash payment of a hundred thousand ducats and the hand of his niece, Bianca Maria, with a dowry of three hundred thousand ducats more. The price was high, but the alliance would not be too dearly bought, if by means of it he could, when necessary, bring into Italy a power capable of becoming a counterpoise to the might of France. To the French he excused himself as best he

could, pretending that his dealings with Maximilian were designed to cement the new union between that monarch and Charles VIII; but the falsehood of that plea was transparent, and the offended Charles looked with grave suspicion upon the whole affair, though affecting pleasure in the news, so as not to alienate the Italian ally without whose aid his schemes could scarcely succeed.

If Charles could not do without the help of Ludovic, neither could the new Imperial connexion offer to Ludovic any permanent hope of dispensing with the protection of Charles, for time did not lessen his unpopularity with his subjects, his fear of Naples, his suspicion of Florence, or his distrust of Venice and the Pope. In his dread of bringing the foreigner into Italy, and in the assurance of obloquy which such an outrage must entail, he was still vacillating between rival policies when Charles' envoy, Perron de Baschi, visited Milan in June; but the visit was a reminder of the need for action, and in July he sent explicit instructions to his representative at the French Court. This representative, Maffeo Pirovani, who was acting as the Milanese chargé d'affaires during the absence of Belgiojoso, reported[1] on 3rd August how the instructions had been carried out.

Having applied to de Vesc to be received in audience by the King, Pirovani was told that the best plan would be to arrange for the meeting to take place when the Court was out hawking in the open country, and when no one need be present except the Prince of Salerno, from whom Charles had no secrets. 'When the hour for mounting on horseback came, the Seneschal of Beaucaire came and told me to get into the saddle and await His Majesty at the castle gate, and there to present my letters credential, but not to look for an audience until we had reached the open country. . . . Scarcely had we got into the saddle, the Secretary, the Prince of Salerno, and I, when His Majesty appeared and approached; whereupon, thinking it more seemly, I dismounted, and presented myself to His Majesty on foot, kissing his hand as I presented my letters credential, and at the same time communicating the messages entrusted to me by Your Excellency. His Majesty reined in his horse, took and read the letters credential, and

[1] Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, second edit., vol. v, pp. 29–32.

listened to me most graciously; he then told me to remount, waiting until I had done so; and then he called me to his side, telling me that he was delighted to see me, and enquiring after Your Excellency's health. I replied that you were well, and would be but too happy when assured that His Most Christian Majesty flourished and enjoyed a glory and happiness appropriate to the greatness of his Crown. Speaking in his own language, as is his invariable custom, he said that he was pleased to have good news of Your Excellency, because he knew your great affection for his person. He then suggested that I should deliver my message in plain terms, assuring me that he would hear me gladly, and adding that he would call up the Prince of Salerno, to interpret his reply. Having called up the Prince and requested his attention, he turned to me and told me to speak. Having doffed my hat, I began with a tactful reference to the embassy of Perron, and then, with such skill as I have gained from the favour of Heaven and of Your Excellency, I touched clearly and in order upon the points of Your Excellency's message, according to the tenor of my instructions. Including His Majesty's reply in his own tongue and the Prince of Salerno's interpretation of it into ours, the conversation lasted a good half hour, and the Duke of Orleans and his party, finding the audience tiresome and seeing game to be plentiful, strove to distract His Majesty's attention from the audience; but instead of heeding them, the King made for a spot where he could listen to me undisturbed; and apart from a Scottish archer on horseback who rode fifty paces behind, not a soul ventured to come anywhere near His Majesty while the audience lasted, which was doubtless the result of the Seneschal's orders. After listening most attentively to the speech I made in Your Excellency's name, His Majesty began most pleasantly to answer me, and although not at all proficient in his language, yet, knowing what matters were under discussion, I was able to make out that he treated summarily the heads afterwards expounded to me in his presence by the Prince, namely, that he was assured of your love and friendship, believed gratefully that you rejoiced in the welfare of his kingdom, and thought your offers honourable and well-pleasing. He said that,

though Your Excellency might be actuated by your regard for him, yet you would be procuring the honour and benefit of the State of Milan, because the greater his power, the more conspicuous would be the evidences of his goodwill. He then went on to refer to the Neapolitan enterprise, and said that, knowing your wisdom and your affection for him, he proposed to throw upon your shoulders the whole weight of that affair, being well assured that you would counsel and direct him well; and the better to give effect to his intention, he had resolved, as soon as we should reach Orleans, which will be three or four days hence, to tell me of certain occurrences in that part of the world concerning the enterprise. This information was to be passed on to Your Excellency, and he particularly instructed me to communicate to you his present reply, . . . adding that he looked forward with eagerness to the arrival of Count Carlo di Barbiano, who, as I had told him, would come with full instructions after the return of Perron from Rome.'

In a second audience, which followed quickly upon the first, Charles examined Pirovani about various aspects of the political situation in Italy, and was told by him in reply of the Pope's disposition to go over to the Aragonese, of Ludovic's efforts to keep him in the right path, and of other matters affecting the Neapolitan enterprise. The King listened attentively, made Pirovani repeat what he did not quite understand, and then said to him in French: 'In counselling me as he does, Signor Ludovic shows himself to be my good cousin and friend, and I am much obliged to him. Go with my Lord Seneschal to his room, and repeat to him, to the Prince of Salerno, and to the General of Languedoc what you have just told me; and then, after considering the matter with them, I will give you an answer.'

In his conference with the lords Pirovani read extracts from Ludovic's correspondence, upon which Briçonnet made notes to communicate to his master. After some private conversation together, the lords reminded the envoy that Milan had not yet indicated what assistance she was prepared to guarantee, and asked if his instructions dealt specifically with this point. Upon Pirovani replying that they did, the lords asked if they might see the passage for themselves, and Pirovani pointed it out to them,

apparently to their satisfaction. They then proceeded to impart to him their confident hopes of success. The King's power was sufficient of itself to carry through this or any other enterprise, and Ludovic's aid and counsel would make the task easier and be a guarantee of victory. Touching the Pope, they asserted that a mere display of French power would suffice to bring him to heel, and there were two ways in which the King, without so much as stirring from his palace, could make him change his tune: one was a Council, in which the Emperor and the King of the Romans could easily be induced to co-operate; the other was a refusal of obedience and of the disposition of benefices in the kingdom, which were worth a considerable revenue to Rome. 'After this discussion, the night being far spent, we all went away.'[1]

Next day Pirovani went back for his answer. He could not find de Vesc, who had left for his country-house, and it was not until nightfall that he was received by the Bishop of Saint-Malo. When at length admitted, he was told by the Bishop that he was the bearer of a message from the King: His Majesty thanked Ludovic for his affection and good advice, but for the moment he could come to no decision; he was expecting to receive letters from Perron de Baschi and other information, and when he got them the question of the enterprise would be further considered, and a suitable conclusion reached.

Things were still in the same indefinite and uncertain state when Belgiojoso returned from Italy in September, and saw Charles at Amboise. Nobody could make out whether Charles was serious in his designs or no: at Florence the conquest of Naples was believed to be impracticable; the astute Venetian Signory paid no heed to the talk of it; and Ludovic was in a nervous fever lest he should have put his money on the wrong horse. 'Is Your Majesty really resolved to carry out the enterprise?' asked Belgiojoso. 'Signor Ludovic desires to be informed upon this point, for he is well aware that in affairs of this consequence people often talk much and end by doing nothing.' Knowing the King as he did, and being familiar with his habit of listening in apathetic silence to all that

[1] Romanin, *op. cit.*, pp. 32–3.

was said to him, Belgiojoso was astonished to behold the effect which his speech produced. Charles turned upon him with a vivacity altogether unwonted in him, and with his face suffused with emotion: 'What,' he cried in angry tones; 'a thousand times by my ambassadors and in my letters have I communicated to Signor Ludovic my intentions touching this enterprise; aye, and I have confirmed them by your mouth and Perron's; and now you come and ask me what I mean to do about it! Truly, I looked rather for a declaration by the Duke of Bari of his readiness to fulfil his obligations.' The enterprise had been well thought out, he went on, with all that it entailed, and he would adhere to it, even if Ludovic were to fail him; and in such an event let Ludovic look to himself, for by means of the Orleanist claims to Milan, to which Naples wanted to divert French attention, he could easily be made to repent of his defection. With the Pope there were means to deal; he had good hopes of Venice; and if Florence would not help of her own free will, she should be constrained, and so much the worse for her. He was at peace with Maximilian, with England, and with Spain, and in consideration of the restitution of Roussillon the Spanish sovereigns had promised to be his friends and to ignore the claims of Ferrante on the score of his kinship. A great expense would be involved, but he had thought of that, and had five or six hundred thousand ducats set aside for a beginning, with which he meant to hire Italian troops. He intended to call up his *gens d'armes* at Christmas, and with a view to this mobilization to set out shortly for Provence or Lyons. Upon his Royal word, he concluded, he was resolved to carry out the enterprise, for he was so far committed to it that he could not without infamy draw back. Throughout this conversation Charles displayed an enthusiasm, energy, and tenacity of purpose which impressed the ambassador the more for its sharp contrast with the air of stolid indifference with which the King usually listened to those whom he received in audience: 'I am astonished', he wrote, in closing his report,[1] 'at the firmness of his resolve.'

[1] Belgiojoso to Ludovic, Amboise, 28th September 1493: Romanin, *op. cit.*, pp. 36–9; Delaborde, *Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*, p. 290.

In the course of these anxious months no pains had been spared to build up Milanese influence at the French Court by the means which in all the Courts of that period were found to be the most efficacious. In all the arts of bribery, corruption, and intrigue Ludovic and his envoys were adepts, and those who were in authority around the King of France were fitted neither by character nor by inclination to resist the triple assault of delicate flattery, bounteous largesses, and seductive promises of ecclesiastical preferment and Neapolitan spoils. 'Signor Ludovic has acquired a great influence here in Italian matters by his money and Papal favours. In this Court, as in others, influence can scarcely be retained unless it be raised upon a pecuniary foundation or some other solid basis.' So wrote Lorenzo Spinelli in June 1493,[1] and in August he reverted to the same theme in a letter from which I have already quoted in another connexion.[2] 'To gain the lords who are in some authority about the King, Signor Ludovic has spent much money. . . . The action of some of the King's trusted advisers—thinking, possibly, that they are doing well—in bringing him to his present opinion, is attributable to Signor Ludovic's largesses.' Whilst these practices were suspected, the diplomatic activities of the Milanese Government were patent to the world; and in the circumstances it was small wonder if Ludovic got the credit of bringing the French into Italy. That imputation, however, he indignantly denied. 'It is not true', he declared to his brother, Ascanio, 'that I am the instigator of this affair. The Most Christian King took the initiative himself, as is proved by the demands he addressed to the late Pope for the investiture and by his autograph letters to myself.'[3] For a time, he said, he had done his best to discourage Charles, suggesting possible dangers and enlarging upon

[1] Buser, *Die Beziehungen der Mediceer zu Frankreich*, p. 539.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 540; and see pp. 243–4 of my first volume.

[3] The Cardinal of Gurk expressed the opinion that Charles' claims to Naples '*sunt fatuitates*; non sono salvo che 5 o 6 che solicita quella impresa et è vero che per avanti io credeva quod ille Lodovico de Mediolano fusse stato lo impulsor et exitator de tal cosa; ma hora ho sappto che luy non è statto': Paolo Negri, 'Milano, Ferrara e Impero durante l'Impresa di Carlo VIII in Italia,' *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series V, Anno XLIV, part ii (1917), p. 431.

probable obstacles; but after peace had been made at Senlis Charles had made it clear that the enterprise was a settled resolve with him. 'I will not deny', Ludovic continued, 'that at that time, in view of the bad conduct of the King of Naples towards our Holy Father, I was not displeased at finding an opportunity to come to the aid of His Holiness. So I gave up dissuading the Most Christian King from his enterprise; indeed, I actually applauded his intention.' [1]

How far the crafty ruler of Milan was sincere in his profession of devout concern for the welfare of the Holy Father may be gauged by another letter which in March 1494 he addressed to the same correspondent.[2] 'It would be very difficult to prevent the coming of the French; and even if that were not so, I must confess that I believe their coming to be necessary, not that I wish for or am compassing the ruin of King Alfonso, to whom I am well disposed, as you will soon see; but I want to humble that overweening pride of his, lest after his father's fashion he should forget that he ought to treat other Italian potentates, including ourselves, not as inferiors, but as equals. To achieve this, we must keep his hands too busy at home to go grasping other people's possessions; and so the French must come to Italy. But to ensure that the results of their coming do not go beyond our needs and end in the utter ruin of the King of Naples, I have arranged that which you wot of, namely, that the King of the Romans should also cross the Alps. Such a counterpoise will prevent the French from becoming more powerful than they are already. This Prince is no more anxious than are we to see the French grow stronger; he is connected with us by marriage; and he is bent on recovering the supremacy in Italy which belongs of right to the Empire. Thus it will be easy to keep French progress within bounds.'

In preparing the ground for his enterprise a good deal would depend upon the success with which Charles might meet in Rome, not by reason of any material aid to be expected of the Pope, for his military weakness was notorious, but because it rested with him to grant or refuse

[1] Delaborde, *Expédition*, p. 275. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 338.

the investiture which was essential to the complete validity of Charles' claim. To request this investiture was the secret object of Perron de Baschi's visit to Rome, where his presence was attributed officially to his desire to buy horses for his master; and in the early days of Alexander's rule the French felt justified in cherishing good hopes of him, for they believed that the fear and dislike of Naples, which seemed to be inevitable growths in the mind of its Papal suzerain, must be reinforced in Alexander by the influence of Ascanio Sforza and by the strained relations to which the affair of Virginio Orsini and Franceschetto Cibo's castles had given rise. In reality, however, the likelihood of Alexander according whole-hearted support to the French cause was much more remote than it appeared to the optimistic entourage of Charles VIII, for in the mind of the Pope prudence and prejudice must soon concur to deflect him from the path in which Ascanio and Ludovic were trying to lead him. Half the trouble between Naples and the Papacy during the last thirty years had been due to Papal apprehension in the presence of Ferrante's growing power; to substitute for Ferrante the head of the strongest military monarchy in Europe would have been a piece of gratuitous folly of which the most obtuse Pontiff could scarcely have been guilty; and none had ever reckoned political stupidity among Borgia's defects. The policy which considerations of self-interest would suggest to any occupant of St. Peter's throne was further recommended to Alexander VI by personal inclination and racial sympathy. Regardless as he might sometimes be of the claims of his sacred office, Alexander did not wholly ignore the fact that the Pope was in a sense the custodian of the liberties of Italy. Nor did he ever forget his Spanish birth: the prelates whom he most favoured, the diplomatic agents whom he most trusted, the friends with whom he most consorted, came from Spain; and after those of the Papacy it was the interests of Spain that most weighed with him in the determination of his policy.[1] The disposition of the Crown of Naples was a matter in which King Ferdinand of Aragon was vitally interested. It was true that the legitimate branch of the Royal House of Aragon, of which

[1] W. H. Woodward, *Cesare Borgia, A Biography*, p. 56.

Ferdinand was the head, had never accepted with a good grace the disposition by which the first Alfonso had established his bastard on the Neapolitan throne, and a declaration that Ferrante was a usurper would not in itself be likely to shock the susceptibilities of his Royal cousin. But if Ferrante was to be evicted, the eviction must not be for the benefit of Charles VIII, for, as Alexander well knew, the conquerors of Granada would rather see Naples in the clutches of the Turk himself than have it acknowledge the sovereignty of the detested rival whose growing power they viewed with an ever-deepening alarm. That Alexander of his own free will would concede to Charles the investiture of Naples was about as probable as that Ferdinand would gratuitously renounce the cession of Roussillon and Cerdagne or that Henry VII would voluntarily forgo payment of the Étaples indemnity.

If at first Alexander seemed to vacillate and to give encouragement to the French, the circumstance must be ascribed to the embarrassment of his position. He found himself upon the horns of a dilemma. As a temporal sovereign he was at the mercy of the King of Naples, whose fleets could close the Tiber, and whose armies could join with the brigand bands of the Campagna barons to carry destruction up to the walls of Rome. As a spiritual potentate, on the other hand, he might well fear to find himself not less completely at the mercy of the King of France, whose trump card was a threat of Conciliar action to annul the simoniacal election which had placed Alexander where he was. It therefore behoved him to temporize, to protect the interests of the Aragonese far enough for safety but not so far as to impair the market value of Papal support, and to discourage the French without goading them into retaliatory action. Accordingly, when Perron de Baschi reached Rome in the summer of 1493 his reception was dubious. He was told in public that, if Charles had pretensions to the throne of Naples, the correct course for him to pursue was to submit them to the suzerain's arbitration. In private, however, the Pontiff, without definitely committing himself, contrived to suggest by his manner that he was not ill-disposed to the French cause ; and under cover of instructions which might at any time be disavowed,

he commissioned Cardinal Savelli to give explicit assurances of support.

Perron's experience of Papal equivocation might have furnished Charles and his favourites with food for meditation, but their optimism was blind to warning signals, and the news which followed of Alexander's alliance with Ferrante came upon them as a painful surprise. At first they made no secret of their indignation; but even now they could not bring themselves to believe that the Pope meant to play them false, and observers noticed that they recovered quickly from the first shock of disillusionment.[1] 'News is received here regularly from Italy by way of Milan and otherwise, and they have heard amongst other things about the agreement between the Pope and Ferrante. Though aware that it is contrary to their interests, the King and his advisers do not seem to be much perturbed about it; I do not know if this is out of affectation, to create an impression of strength and independence, as is their humour, or out of a genuine elation and assurance that even without the Pope they can compass their ends. They refuse to believe that Florence can fail them, and by bribing her with a part of Apulia they hope to induce Venice also to support the enterprise. Amid so many alarums and excursions it is impossible to give a temperate account of the situation, for mere wisdom is inadequate to form an intelligent estimate of affairs here, where you need powers of divination or a magician's art. The King rules personally with the help of six or eight of his lords, and especially of two, the Seneschal and the General. The cession of Roussillon on a promise by the King of Spain not to offer opposition shows how much the King has the enterprise at heart. It has been put into his head that prophecies portend his acquisition of Naples; and those who disparage the design get a very reluctant hearing.'

Though Charles might affect indifference, his Milanese confederate knew better than to belittle the moral value of Papal approbation, and would not lightly abandon the attempt to win Alexander over to the French side. He argued the case with the dialectical skill of which he was a

[1] Francesco della Casa to Piero de' Medici, 18th September 1493: Canestrini et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques*, vol. i, pp. 255–6.

master.[1] He represented to the Pope that the enterprise would be supremely easy, if Alexander and the French King should act in concert, for the military preparations of Naples were belated and inadequate. If he were to side with the French, success would bring him the fulfilment of all his desires; if he were to go against them, he must inevitably suffer ills for which Naples could make no amends. Could he doubt that the enterprise would be to his advantage, when the abandonment of it would entail his continued subjection to the King of Naples and the Roman barons? From that subjection he could free himself without cost upon the coming of the French; he could humble the Orsini, and give their possessions to his sons; the Aragonese would be reduced to the status of subservient vassals; and thenceforward he would be able to rule the States of the Church with a staff instead of a sword. A French invasion might not be wholly for the good of Italy, but in the state of perpetual subjection in which he found himself the Pope was like a man who must bear with a tertian ague to obtain relief from a chronic fever. Further, he must bear in mind that he was in very ill repute with the French, and if he were to embrace the other cause, the King would refuse obedience and join with Maximilian in convening a General Council, when Milan would have no option but to follow the Royal lead, and the Pope, persecuted by the Ultramontanes and deserted by the Sacred College, would be reduced to the last straits.

The knowledge that the Pope was discussing his position with Ludovic added to the growing burden of the dying Ferrante's troubles. He might have spared himself anxiety, so far as Alexander's attitude was concerned. In approaching Ludovic upon the question of the French invasion, the Pope's object was to exert his influence in a quarter where something might be done to avert or postpone that unwelcome event. He had not the smallest intention of gratifying the wishes of Ludovic's Ultramontane friend. Charles' ambassadors appeared in Consistory, and did their best to stop the grant of an investiture to Ferrante's heir. But the Pope's mind was made up. Within a month

[1] For Ludovic's arguments and for Ferrante's counterblast see Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, vol. ii, part ii, pp. 421–31.

of Ferrante's death Alexander issued a Bull in which he openly admonished Charles not to disturb the peace of Italy. He had heard with astonishment, he said, of Charles' preparations for attacking a Christian Prince, when a union of all Christian Princes would scarcely avail to ward off the Turkish peril. Was it not to be feared that Charles would drive the King of Naples to invoke infidel aid? If his pretensions to the Neapolitan throne were genuine, he had but to submit them to the Pope's arbitration. Meanwhile, let him beware of those who counselled this enterprise, but who after the Italian fashion would most probably betray him in the end.

This Bull, said the angry Charles, could scarcely have been more favourable to Alfonso if it had been drafted in the Neapolitan Chancellery; nor was his wrath diminished by the fact that up to the last moment a Papal envoy in Paris had been fooling the Government with assurances of Papal favour. In the Consistory of 18th April, in which Alfonso was officially recognized by Alexander, the French ambassadors by their master's orders lodged an angry remonstrance, and proclaimed his intention of appealing to a future Council. Before leaving Rome, they also carried to a definite conclusion certain clandestine negotiations upon which they had entered as a precaution, and which had for their object the taking of the Colonnas and other fighting barons of the Campagna into the pay of France.

In the diplomatic relations with the city of Florence which preceded the invasion of Italy France had to record a failure almost as complete as that with which her diplomacy had met in the protracted dealings with the Holy See. I have already spoken of the divided sympathies of Florence, where the Aragonese inclinations of the Government clashed with the Francophil leanings of its subjects. The difficulties of Piero de' Medici's position were aggravated by the alliance of Alexander VI with the King of Naples in the summer of 1493. For his own sake, if not for that of his subjects, Piero must hesitate to incur the enmity of France, where the interests of the Medici Bank were considerable; but neither could he lightly confront the

hostility of Naples and the Papacy combined, for those powers could inflict grievous harm upon the dominions of Florence, and they had at their mercy the innumerable mercantile houses which Florentines had established in their territories. Whilst inclination prompted Piero to espouse the cause of Naples, safety forbade any overt act of partisanship; he must do nothing to facilitate a French invasion; but neither must he actively oppose it; and if the fates should be kind, something might occur to deflect Charles from the policy in which Piero's perplexities found their origin.

Diplomatic finesse which would have evoked sympathetic comprehension in the polished Courts of Italy employed its wiles in vain against French bluntness and impetuosity. Charles wanted to know whether Piero was prepared to give an active support to the impending invasion of Naples, and to this straightforward question the Florentine embassies, which rapidly succeeded each other at the French Court, brought replies of increasing vagueness and obscurity. The first ambassador, Francesco della Casa, arrived in June 1493. His earliest impressions were favourable, and he thought that Piero need feel no immediate alarm. Eventually, no doubt, the Republic would have to take sides, and already Ludovic was urging that it should be required to pronounce; but at the moment Charles' plans were in suspense. Perron de Baschi was in Italy, hunting up possible supporters. The Duke of Lorraine had objected to Charles' pretensions to Naples, alleging a superior title in himself as the heir of Anjou. The Emperor was proposing a Crusade. The ambassador was almost tempted to suppose that the whole business was a case of much ado about nothing, for no sensible person thought the enterprise practicable, and even the King's favourites did not seem to have much faith in it. However, Piero must recollect that he had enemies in the two most influential councillors, namely, the General of Languedoc, always ill disposed to Florence, and the Seneschal of Beaucaire, wholly given over to Ludovic. The General had already tried to get rid of the embassy, but happily the trap he had laid had been detected and avoided.[1]

[1] Dispatch of 17th July 1493: Canestrini et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques*, vol. i, pp. 234–8.

In September two more ambassadors reached the French Court. One of them was Gentile Becchi, Bishop of Arezzo, whose vanity had been a contributory cause of Piero's ill-starred refusal to join in a corporate rendering of obedience to the new Pope; the other was Piero Soderini, who was soon to become the chief magistrate of the city which had now entrusted its diplomatic interests to his care. The situation, which had deteriorated rapidly since della Casa's arrival, had become critical. The suspicions aroused in the minds of the King and his advisers by the evasive replies given to Perron at Florence were strengthened by ugly rumours, which they credited, of secret negotiations between Piero and Alfonso for an alliance against any sovereign who should attempt to disturb the peace of Italy. There had been talk in the Council of expelling all Florentines from the country. Briçonnet opposed precipitate action, urging the importance of having the Republic on the French side when the expedition should take place; but della Casa believed that anything might happen about the expulsion, 'for, by Heaven,' as he disgustedly exclaimed, 'it would make you sick to see how things are run here.' [1] Becchi set to work, and poured the purest brand of oratorical oil upon the troubled waters; but the nearer the decisive moment approached, the clearer it became that Ciceronian periods must soon cease to disguise the hollowness of Piero's protestations. At the beginning of February 1494, when stimulated by the news of Ferrante's death to a renewal of his resolve, Charles sent for the representatives of Florence, and demanded plain answers to plain questions. He intended, he said, to recover his kingdom of Naples and the countries in the occupation of the Infidel, and in this task he required the help of Florence—three hundred lances, the complement of infantry, and six galleys. In return he would take the Republic under his protection as though it formed part of his own dominions, and he would arrange with Milan that the dispute about Genoa should be suspended during his enterprise, and, if possible, terminated altogether. He would leave them to settle the matter in detail with the Bishop of Saint-Malo and the Seneschal of Beaucaire.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

The attitude adopted by these lords in the ensuing conference was very menacing; they even went to the length of declaring that their partisans in Florence would produce a revolution against Piero's rule, if he should refuse to accept the French demands. An undertaking by the ambassadors to provide the specified assistance did little to mollify them. They declined to believe in the genuineness of the offer, and demanded production of the authority under which it was made. Asked if it would be accepted as satisfactory evidence of the goodwill of Florence and her rulers, they denounced it as inadequate. The affair was going forward, they said, and now or never would it be seen if Florence meant to serve the King.

Was the affair really going forward? Was an invasion of Naples practicable? Had Piero to reckon with the peril of a French descent upon Italy? These were problems to which the Florentine envoys unceasingly reverted in their correspondence, blowing now hot, now cold, according to the measure of the heat of French preparations and the degree of chilliness of their reception by the Royal favourites. 'My lord of Saint-Malo is cross and suspicious, hostile to Florence, by nature changeable and untrustworthy, and, in addition, improperly influenced by his hope of obtaining a Cardinal's hat. . . . Neither is the Seneschal any friend to our city; but he is an intelligent man, with more stability than his colleague. These two monopolize power, and since we cannot win them over, I fear lest they treat us with unreasonable rigour. There are no others to whom we can turn for protection, for no one here can do anything without them, and none dares to offend them. . . . Besides, we have few friends. Among the Princes of the Blood and other seigneurs there is not, indeed, a single one who favours the enterprise, but in spite of that the affair is pressed forward by the King's obstinate determination, and every one gives way, especially now that things are so far advanced and so near the time of action that the project cannot without a great upheaval be given up or put off. . . . The business grows hotter day by day; the dispatch of envoys to the potentates of Italy is decided upon; and M. d'Esquerdes is on the point of leaving for Rome.'[1]

[1] Dispatch of 28th February 1494: *Ibid.*, pp. 276–8.

Three weeks later the writer was in a still gloomier mood. 'The reply made by our ambassadors six days ago was very ill received', he reported on 18th March,[1] 'and we have narrowly escaped a declaration of war. However, in a calmer temper, and advised by reason, they realized that, if they would make use of you, they must avoid a rupture. I gather from every one that at the moment their policy is to refrain from pushing matters to an extremity, and, after allowing some time to pass in this ambiguity, to send an ambassador to find out precisely how far you will support His Majesty in this enterprise. The person is not settled, but it seems likely that he will be some one entirely in Ludovic's interest. . . . I expect that you have not put much faith in our reports, confused, uncertain, and inaccurate as they are; but you must excuse us, for we send you the best that is to be got from such a country, Court, and Government as this. Amid all the confusion and uncertainty one thing may, I think, be taken for granted, namely, that they will pass into Italy some time this year. You know the power of this kingdom well enough to feel sure that the young King will do his utmost to pursue a matter about which he is so keen; and his obstinate determination to adventure his own person therein remains unshaken. I am well aware that to one who follows matters from a distance, and founds his opinion upon reason, not upon observation, the enterprise must seem to be beset by infinite difficulties; and in this kingdom itself there are many who feel grave doubts whether it is possible for them to go this year with an adequate force, seeing that they are short of money and have anticipated their revenue. The doubt is reasonable. Nevertheless, one must reckon with the supposition that M. de Saint-Malo has six or seven hundred thousand ducats in ready money put aside for the King's war; with the assertion of the Government that the financial resources are adequate; and with the power and determination of the King.'

A victim to the imprudent habit of refusing to expect the unpalatable, Piero de' Medici paid no heed to the reiterated warnings of his emissaries. In the city which he ruled political sympathies and commercial interests

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 285–8.

caused the increasing irritation of the French Government to be viewed with less composure, and it was rather to soothe domestic discontent than in the hope of achieving any political object that at the end of March Guidantonio Vespucci and Piero Capponi were sent forth on yet another embassy to Charles VIII. They were to plead Florentine difficulties and to crave French forbearance. Seeing that the territories of the Republic bordered those of the Pope, who had joined the Neapolitans, an avowed partisanship with France must involve invasion and commercial ruin. Let Charles rely upon the proved affection of the city. The grateful memory of countless benefits conferred could never fade in the breasts of those who bore the lilies of France on their shield and treasured them in their hearts.

The sentiment was unexceptionable, but the time was at hand when procrastination, evasion, and ingenious subterfuge could no longer avail to hold the fates in leash; when honeyed eloquence and meaningless professions would be drowned by the rattle of swords in their scabbards and the tramp of armies on the march; when the diplomatic interludes of Italy must make way for the barbarian drama of events. In the first days of May a French embassy reached Florence and proffered a formal request for a free passage and supplies. The Signory, as usual, shuffled. Thereupon the French Government presented an ultimatum: unable to believe that Florence would desert his cause for that of his adversaries, the King tries a last approach before taking the field; the Republic must pronounce. Again the Signory took refuge in generalities. Then the blow fell. 'Six days ago, when with the Court at Dijon', wrote della Casa on the 29th June,[1] 'I heard from the ambassadors that they and the staff of your bank had been expelled. By their orders I went instantly to the King, to deny the false reports about you, such as that you had called in Neapolitan troops. His Majesty did not seem to credit me much, saying that he would believe in your goodwill when he saw tangible proofs of it. I have expostulated with the Seneschal and with M. de Saint-Malo, but to no purpose, each alleging it to be proved to

[1] Dispatch of 29th June 1494: Canestrini et Desjardins, *op. cit.*, pp. 313–15.

his satisfaction that you are a partisan of Alfonso, while the Florentine people is favourable to France. The King, the Bishop, and the Seneschal are so much poisoned against you that the antidote of reason has no effect in your justification. On the other hand, I have spoken long with Monsieur and Madame de Bourbon, with the Admiral, with Marshal de Gié, with the Governor of Burgundy, with my lord of Rouen [Georges d'Amboise], and with many other leading men at the Court; the methods of those who rule displease them; but, the thing being done, and no right-minded seigneur having much influence, they can but say that they will befriend you, when occasion offers; especially is this the case with Bourbon, who, in his annoyance with those who govern, let out to me that we owe our expulsion to Ludovic's ambassador.'

By these negotiations Charles had learnt what reception to expect in three of the greater States in Italy. He might count upon the co-operation of Milan; he must reckon with the likelihood of hostility in Rome; and he could look for support in Florence only if his partisans should succeed in imposing their will upon the Government which he had estranged. He had also taken measures to ascertain the disposition of other Italian States. The greatest of them all, Venice, he had found wedded to a policy of neutrality. With no great belief in the likelihood of a French invasion, and with a profound conviction that she would be well advised to hold herself aloof from the possibility of entanglement, Venice had met all overtures with a polite refusal to take sides. Observers who had made a close study of her tactics were satisfied that 'the policy here is to wait and see,[1] to keep everybody amused with phrases, to refrain with particular care from offending France, and to look out as sharply not to offend Ludovic. . . . They are disinclined to move until necessity constrains them, and are most anxious to avoid expense, so that the mere coming of the King of France, even in force, would not of itself stir them, but only some peril manifestly threatening

[1] 'Costoro sono per stare a vedere': the Florentine Ambassadors at Venice to Piero de' Medici, 5th August 1494: Canestrini et Desjardins, *op. cit.*, pp. 500–1.

themselves. Economy is a craze of the whole city. This Doge and his brother, who preceded him in office, claim credit for never having imposed a penny of taxation from the time of the Ferrara war until now; should any expense be incurred, this claim would collapse; and it seems reasonable to suppose that they will desire to maintain their reputation to the end.'

Amongst the lesser States of the peninsula Charles could look for useful recruits. The Duke of Ferrara, the father-in-law of Ludovic and the sworn foe of Venice, which had wrested the Polesine from his grasp, would welcome any project calculated to produce the state of commotion which might lead to the recovery of his lost and lamented possessions. Bentivoglio at Bologna, who was in Ludovic's pay, might be expected to give assistance. Siena dared not declare herself, but professed a desire to help. The Colonnas and Savelli were ready, for a consideration, to pledge their not very trustworthy words. Of the northern States within her sphere of influence France might feel secure; and if Savoy, Montferrat, and Saluzzo could furnish neither men nor money, they could offer that which was more important, a free passage to the Lombard plain. Asti, too, was in French hands, and Asti was the 'Calais of Italy'.

Concurrently with these diplomatic activities the French Government had also done something to advance its domestic preparations for the projected expedition. The first step was to create a favourable public opinion, and for this purpose to demonstrate the validity of Charles' claim. The evidence which de Vesc and others had collected was accordingly submitted to judicial examination at the hands of a commission of the Parlement of Paris, which reported that the title of His Majesty to the throne of Naples was as indisputable as his title to the throne of France. Armed with this finding, to which he took care to give publicity, the King then summoned his Council, specially strengthened for the occasion, and requested it to advise him upon the expediency of asserting his claim. At the same time he sent for d'Esquerdes, the most experienced and by common repute the ablest soldier in the kingdom, and asked him to

prepare a plan of campaign with an estimate of the probable requirements in money, *gens d'armes*, infantry, mercenaries, artillery, ships, and other warlike material. This was in November 1493. In January 1494 the Neapolitan ambassadors were dismissed; and at the end of February, after a prolonged discussion in the Council, it was decided to announce to the States of Italy that war was resolved upon, and that the Royal army would shortly take the field. In March the King transferred his Court to Lyons, so as to be in closer touch with Italy, sent an advance-guard under d'Aubigny to Asti, arranged for the enlistment of troops in Lombardy, and commissioned a member of Briçonnet's family to proceed to Genoa and put in hand the chartering or construction of warships and transports.

'What is necessary for the expedition?' the Bishop of Arezzo asked himself. 'Two millions in gold; an army, a fleet, and artillery; Papal Briefs; undertakings by the Spaniards; an alliance with Maximilian; confederates in Naples; the neutrality of all the Italian powers.'[1] It seemed to the Bishop that the mere statement of these requirements sufficed to demonstrate the visionary nature of the French designs. Their Royal author took a more sanguine view. He knew that his army was the strongest in Europe, and that the like of his artillery did not anywhere exist; he thought that his alliance with Milan, which would add the resources of Genoa to his own navy, would invest him with a maritime strength more than sufficient for his purpose; he flattered himself that at Barcelona and Senlis he had purchased the acquiescence of Spain and the Empire; in the outcome of recent negotiations he saw an earnest of the support, or at worst a pledge of the neutrality, of Italian Governments; he believed that Papal recognition could not be withheld for ever; and he felt confident of welcome by the miserable subjects of the detested Aragonese. In one vital particular, scarcity of money, indeed, the way seemed less clear, for little progress had been made in the provision of the two millions for which Marshal d'Esquerdes had deemed it prudent to budget; but with these sordid cares it was for the financial experts to grapple, and Charles would not have them cast

[1] Canestrini et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques*, vol. i, p. 342.

their shadows across a horizon otherwise so bright with promise.

Unhappily for Charles, a willingness to go to war without first counting the cost does not deprive financial resources of their importance in the equipment of a belligerent. From the first moment of the King's arrival at Lyons his advisers found themselves incessantly hampered by pecuniary difficulties; nor were those difficulties diminished by the recklessness with which a pleasure-loving sovereign squandered money upon official ceremonies, upon jousts, tournaments, and fêtes, and upon the less innocent diversions to which he was allured by the charms of the fair Lyonnaises: 3,500 *l.* were lavished upon the triumphal entry at Lyons at a time when ready money was so scarce that the Bishop of Saint-Malo was at his wits' ends to provide pay for the *gens d'armes* and to defray the travelling expenses of ambassadors. Briçonnet had recourse in turn to all the expedients familiar to embarrassed Governments: arrears of taxation were pressed for, and the revenue of coming years was anticipated; the *taille* was augmented by a supplement of 800,000 *livres*; new *aides* were imposed; the Crown demesnes were farmed out under three-year contracts; Court salaries were reduced; the payment of pensions was suspended; and proposals were considered for taxing the stipends of office-holders and the incomes of the clergy. Such enthusiasm as had ever been evoked by the enterprise evaporated rapidly amongst those who were called upon to bear these burdens, and money dribbled in at a pace which bore no relation to the growth of expenditure. In March the representatives of the towns were summoned to Lyons in the hope that they might be amenable to official persuasion; but their attitude was so unpromising that the Government felt obliged to dismiss them without having ventured to submit any specific proposals; and in the chief cities, such as Paris, Rouen, and Orleans, the Royal demand for subventions was rejected with a firmness that bordered upon insolence.

In these circumstances Briçonnet was left to do the best he could with the contributions of the smaller and less truculent localities, with benevolences imposed upon individuals, with loans from the Milanese Government, and

with sums borrowed at high rates of interest from Italian merchants and bankers. A short-term loan from a syndicate of Lombard merchants had to be secured by the personal guarantee of the chief men at the French Court, one of the guarantors being Commynes, as he was to be unpleasantly reminded before many months had passed. Another and a more substantial contribution of 70,000 ducats at 14 per cent. interest was obtained from the Sauli Bank at Genoa, but only after much negotiation, and upon the terms that all the Generals of Finance should become sureties for its repayment. 'Andrea Scaglia, the managing partner of the Sauli Bank, has just come', wrote della Casa on 27th May 1494,[1] 'and is trying to get out of the bargain, the sum seeming to him to be very large and the security very doubtful; and as no cash has yet passed, the people here are much annoyed and upset. The most strenuous efforts are being made to satisfy the Sauli, so that the loan may go through.'

The King's troubles did not proceed wholly from the reluctance of the people to finance a policy of which it disapproved. Dislike of the enterprise was a sentiment by no means rare among those to whom the task of organization had been entrusted, and they hoped secretly to wreck a project which they were afraid openly to oppose. At various times and for different reasons the policy of obstruction, which multiplied difficulties and augmented delays, received support from almost all of those who were in authority around the King. Of Graville, the Admiral, it was said by a close observer that he was making a show of serving the King with a joyful zeal, but in fact was hunting about for some means to get the business broken off. D'Esquerdes supported the enterprise so long as he expected to command in chief, but when he found that the presence of the King would deprive him of that distinction, he proceeded with the mobilization of the army in a fashion so dilatory as to move even the placid Charles to an indignant outburst. The Bishop of Saint-Malo himself was not quite free from suspicion. He had counted upon being included in Alexander VI's first creation of Cardinals, and, ascribing his omission to the remissness or perfidy of Ludovic and

[1] Canestrini et Desjardins, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

his brother, Ascanio, cooled off perceptibly in his affection for the Sforzas. He knew, too, what the country thought of the King's Italian programme, and he may have asked himself whether it had been prudent to become conspicuously associated with a policy that had incurred universal condemnation and entailed a gigantic hazard.

Adding as it did to the innumerable obstacles which seemed to justify their predictions, this vacillation in high places revived the hopes of those who still desired the abandonment of the enterprise, and the old arguments were pressed once more upon the infatuated monarch. He was told again of the unpopularity of his policy, of the enormous expense which the expedition must involve, of the risks attending a distant adventure, of the duplicity of Italian statesmen, of the perils to be apprehended when some mischance should furnish jealous neighbours with an occasion to seek their revenge. It was certain that the expedition would last until the spring, and thus the invading army would be exposed to the unhealthy Italian autumn, and then to the winter rains and mud, which would make the roads of Romagna and Tuscany impassable, and prevent the movement of guns and stores. Alfonso was not so weak as he had been represented, and now he was allied with the Pope and Florence; these three powers together owned a great part of Italy, and commanded enormous wealth. No reliance could be placed upon the neutrality of Venice. The cunning and unscrupulous Ludovic, always immersed in secret designs for his own profit, would turn against his French allies as soon as he had achieved his object and rid himself of the Aragonese. Italians delighted in treachery to the foreigner, and it would never do to entrust to their uncertain faith the safety of the King and his nobles and the welfare of the realm. From these considerations the conclusion seemed inevitable that 'the conquest of Naples would be difficult, and its retention harder still'.[1]

To suppose, as some did, that the King might be turned from his purpose by such arguments was to misjudge the extent of his infatuation and the strength of his immutable resolve. 'Those who best understand the position assure me', wrote della Casa,[2] 'that the King is so hot and

[1] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 24.

[2] On the 24th May 1494: Canestrini et Desjardins, *op. cit.*, pp. 302, 305.

obstinate upon the enterprise that, unless some setback or disaster supervene, it will not be possible to hold him back. . . . His obstinacy is such that no prudent seigneur cares to run the risk of attempting to dissuade him, since by doing so he is certain to incur His Majesty's displeasure. For this cause more than any other, things are allowed to go forward, shame maintaining that which madness began.'

Any lingering hope that the expedition might be given up was soon dispelled by the influence which two newcomers gained with the King. One of these was Galeazzo di San Severino, who came as Milanese ambassador; the other was Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere. Eloquent, courtly, and athletic, Galeazzo was well fitted to enthral a romantic young sovereign, and the innumerable favours showered upon him testified to his growing authority. He had already done much to infuse new vigour into the work of preparation when the fiery Cardinal who had fled from Ostia came to add his voice to Galeazzo's, and to vanquish the last vestiges of hesitation in the Royal mind. Della Rovere reached Lyons on the 1st June, and was received with signal marks of honour: all the Princes of the Blood rode out to meet him, and archers of the Guard escorted him through decorated streets. The King at once sent for him, came forward to meet him on the stairs, and kept him for over an hour in intimate conversation. The Cardinal reminded Charles of the reasons which had originally induced him to undertake the expedition, and urged the shame of abandoning it at the eleventh hour. For what purpose had Charles weakened his frontiers by the restitution of Artois or opened the door to Spain by the unpopular surrender of Roussillon? He had announced his intention to the world at large: what accidents had since occurred, what difficulties arisen, what dangers shown themselves? Was it not rather the fact that the hope of victory had daily grown stronger, the vanity of hostile resistance become more apparent? What would happen in Italy when it should become known that the King had crossed the Alps? How universal the alarm; how great the dismay of the Pope, beholding the Colonnas in arms beneath his windows; how lively the terror of Piero de' Medici, deserted alike by his own relatives and by a city devoted to France and ardent to recover the liberty it had

lost! In Naples what the tumults, what the terror, what the rebellion! Need Charles fear a lack of cash, when all Italy would compete to supply him, as soon as it should hear the sound of his trumpets and the yet more terrible thunder of his guns? If any should resist, his wealth would fall a prey to the conquering army, for in a country long habituated to a sham warfare no opposition could be offered to French impetuosity. By the surrender of his provinces, by his diplomatic activities, by the great expense which he had incurred, by his many preparations, by the general announcement of his plans, by his own advance to the Alps, Charles had made his designs the public property of Europe, and he must needs carry them out. There was no choice for him now but between glory and shame, between the height of renown and the lowest depth of humiliation.[1]

A few weeks sufficed to put the finishing touches to the work of preparation. In June Gilbert de Montpensier was appointed Captain-General of the army in place of d'Esquerdes, who had recently died, and on the 25th of that month the Duke of Orleans set out for Genoa to take command of the fleet. The transports lay in the harbour of Aigues-Mortes, and although some delay had been caused by an outbreak of plague in Provence, the troops and guns were all but ready to be embarked. The Bailli of Dijon was already in Switzerland, whither he had been sent to recruit a force of 4,000 infantry, of whom 1,500 were to join d'Aubigny's advance-guard, and the rest were to serve under Orleans in the fleet. On the 22nd August Charles left Lyons for Grenoble. Here the final arrangements were made for the government of the kingdom under the Duke of Bourbon as the King's Lieutenant-General and for the care of the little Dauphin, who was entrusted to du Bouchage. Here, too, the baggage was reloaded on mules under the instructions of local muleteers, who understood what was required for a safe passage of the mountains. On the 29th Charles took leave of his Queen, and on the 3rd September spent his first night on Italian soil. So long debated, so often delayed, so nearly abandoned, the Neapolitan expedition had begun.

[1] 'Queste cose, dette in sostanza dal Cardinale': Guicciardini, vol. i, p. 55.

XI

THE INSTRUMENT OF CONQUEST

The size of the army with which Charles VIII invaded Italy in 1494 has been variously estimated both by contemporary writers and by later authorities. Guicciardini,[1] who admitted that the matter was involved in doubt, believed that Charles was accompanied by 200 gentlemen of the Royal Guard, 1,600 lances of six men each, 6,000 Swiss, 6,000 French infantry, of which one-half was Gascon, and a considerable amount of field and siege artillery. Another contemporary, Benoît Mailliard,[2] who as an ecclesiastic could not claim to be an expert in military matters, but who by his residence in the neighbourhood of Lyons, where the army assembled, was in a position to gain some knowledge of the facts, put its numbers much higher, committing himself to a figure which, with the addition of non-combatants, approximated to a hundred thousand men: there were, he said, 10,000 heavy cavalry, 6,200 archers, 8,000 arblasters or cross-bowmen, 8,000 Breton pikemen, 8,000 gunners, 200 artillery officers, 1,200 guns, 8,000 artillery horses, and a numerous personnel in the various technical services. A military historian, Boutaric, who in his *Institutions militaires de la France*[3] was one of the first of modern writers to attempt a scientific analysis of the composition of Charles' force, considered that the infantry alone amounted to nearly fifty thousand men, for according to him there were 10,000 Swiss, divided into three corps, 24,000 French archers, and 12,000 Breton and Gascon cross-bowmen. The diversity of opinion may be due in part to the presence in the army of numerous non-combatants, who might or might not be included in the grand total of the force: there were gentlemen's servants and attendants on the men-at-arms, trumpeters and

[1] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, pp. 58–9.
[2] *Chronique*, ed. G. Guigue (Lyons, 1883), pp. 70–4, 168–71.
[3] Published in 1863: see pp. 369–70.

drummers, carpenters, farriers and ammunition-makers, waggoners and muleteers; a complete household staff was in attendance upon the King; the baggage train was enormous; and at Fornovo, at the close of a campaign and after a long and difficult retreat, the army was still accompanied by some ten thousand non-combatants. In the absence of authoritative estimates it would be rash to hazard a positive statement, but we shall not, perhaps, be far from the mark if we adopt the conclusions of modern scholarship as expounded in a recent edition of Commynes' *Mémoires*. The editor, M. Bernard de Mandrot,[1] believes that the army which Charles led into Italy contained about thirty thousand combatant troops, not counting the contingent furnished by Ludovic il Moro or the Italian troops taken directly into the King's pay. The King's first idea had been to get together 21,000 men, but upon the representations of the Prince of Orange this number was much increased, and it was decided to form an army of 30,000 French and Italian troops, with a further provision of 10,000 soldiers for service with the fleet. The army destined to march across the Alps was composed of 9,000 heavy cavalry, 1,200 mounted arblasters, 300 light horse, 3,000 Swiss, 2,000 Norman and Picard foot, 6,000 unmounted arblasters from Gascony and Dauphiné, and a considerable artillery.

As a result of the military policy of his immediate predecessors Charles found himself in possession of a magnificent fighting machine. Of the great work of organization which his father and grandfather had done for France not the least part consisted in the creation and development of the machinery by which their kingdom had been raised to the position of the strongest military power in Europe. The institution of the first standing army had been one of the notable achievements of the reign of Charles VII. His son, Louis XI, was not the man to neglect an instrument so precious to the autocrat, and much of the energy of his vigorous reign, together with a considerable portion of the revenues which he had wrung from his over-burdened

[1] See his edition of Commynes' *Mémoires* (Paris, 1901–3), vol. ii, p. 99, note, referring to Delaborde, *Expédition*, p. 324 *et seq.*; and *cf.* E. Gagliardi, *Der Anteil der Schweizer an den Italienischen Kriegen 1494–1516* (Zurich, 1919), vol. i, pp. 150–1.

subjects, had been devoted to the work of enlarging and perfecting his predecessor's creation. As a result he had been able to bequeath to his successor three invaluable legacies: first, a good and powerful army, reckoned at 60,000 combatant troops ready for immediate service; secondly, a wonderful artillery splendidly equipped, the like of which had never before been seen; and, thirdly, all the towns of his kingdom, both on the frontiers and elsewhere, in the highest state of fortification.[1]

The great importance of Charles VII's military reforms lay in the fact that they transformed the feudal host into the monarchical army. Under feudalism the King had been dependent upon bands of vassals, whom he did not pay, and over whom he exercised little control. Even when well-intentioned, that force was by its nature and composition ill suited to its purpose. The vassal bands which marched under the banners of the feudal lords were unequal in numbers, arms, and skill; the host which they composed formed an unwieldy, undisciplined, heterogeneous mass; and strict limits to the scope of employment and the term of service further impaired its already small utility. Its utter inefficiency had been demonstrated over and over again, and the disasters of the Hundred Years' War, with their accompaniment of unutterable misery inflicted on the country by a soldiery which had thrown off all the restraints of discipline, and regarded neither God nor man, showed how essential it was to have a properly organized and disciplined force at the disposal of the central authority. Such a force Charles VII set himself to fashion, and a perception of the necessity for it won for him the loyal co-operation of the people, who suffered the worst consequences of the evil, and must bear the burden of the remedy.

The re-establishment of a disciplined military force and the restoration of order in the kingdom occupied the decade from 1439 to 1448. The King began by convening the States-General at Orleans, and, having submitted to them the urgent and terrible question of the excesses of the *écorcheurs*, he obtained from them a grant of a perpetual *taille* of 1,200,000 *livres* a year for the enrolment of a

[1] See Boutaric, *Institutions militaires de la France*, p. 368.

disciplined army and the suppression of brigandage. Henceforward there were to be no companies but those enrolled under the Royal banners, and no captains but those who held the King's commission. The provisions with which it was thought proper to strengthen the legislative foundations of the reform shed a lurid light upon the abuses which it was sought to abolish. The captains were to be responsible for the good conduct of the men under their command, who were directed to live in the garrison towns to which they might be posted, and were forbidden to come out and live on the country; they were not to put men to death on their own authority, go about marauding, rob the labourer or prevent him from working, carry off cattle or destroy crops, cut down vines and fruit trees, or burn or injure houses. Summary powers were conferred upon the King's judicial officers for the suppression of violence, and the people at large were invited to give their aid in the apprehension of delinquents. In 1441 the extirpation of the robber bands was taken actively in hand, and they were drafted off to the Swiss and German frontiers, where most of them perished. It then became possible to put in hand the work of reorganization, and in 1444 a comprehensive measure of military reform was initiated. Existing companies were called up for review by the Constable, who picked from their ranks such men as were fitted to make the nucleus of the new army, whilst those whom he rejected were cashiered and sent back to their homes. The new army was composed of fifteen companies, each of one hundred lances, with six mounted men to the lance, namely the man-at-arms, his esquire and his page, two archers, and a valet. Captains were appointed and paid by the King, and were required to maintain a strict discipline among their men. Every man was to be paid monthly out of the yield of the newly imposed *taille des gens de guerre*, the rates of remuneration being 10 *livres* for the man-at-arms, 5 *livres* for the *coustillier* or esquire, and 4½ *livres* for the archer. The captain's salary was at the rate of 1 *livre* for each *lance fournie* in his company. In addition, the *lance fournie* received specified rations and allowances of corn, wine, meat, groceries, fuel, oil, and provender. For the better preservation of discipline, the

companies were quartered in towns in small detachments of ten, twenty, or thirty lances apiece, being billeted upon the people and required to pay for their quarters; and arrangements were made for periodical inspections.

The result of this measure was the creation of an efficient cavalry establishment of 9,000 men, and in the military theory of the day the man-at-arms and his mounted attendants were deemed to form the backbone of the fighting machine. However subsidiary the part of the foot-soldier, it was nevertheless necessary that an infantry force should exist, and the task of creating such a force had still to be carried out by Charles VII and his advisers. They addressed themselves to it in the ordinance of 27th April 1448.[1] 'We command', said the ordinance, 'that in each parish of our kingdom there shall be an archer, who shall always keep himself adequately and suitably accoutred with casque, dagger, sword, bow, and tunic. The said archers shall be called *francs-archers*, and shall be chosen by our *élus* in each *élection* as being the most apt at the manipulation of the bow that may be found in each parish, without favour or regard to wealth or influence. They shall be bound to maintain their said accoutrement, to practise with the bow, and upon every high-day and holiday to don their said accoutrement, that they may become more skilled in the use thereof for our service when required. . . . We ordain that they and every of them be free and quit of, and we hereby exempt them from, all *tailles* and other charges whatsoever to be imposed by us in our realm, as well those appertaining to the upkeep of our *gens d'armes*, garrisons, and guards as all other subventions whatsoever, save and except in the matter of *aides* ordained for war and of the *gabelle du sel*.'

Such were the famous military reforms of Charles VII, to which may be traced the origin of the standing armies of modern Europe. Their practical effect was immediate and in the highest degree salutary. It seemed as though a magician's wand had been waved over the stricken country. Order and security reappeared; agriculture and commerce were re-established. Two or three brief campaigns sufficed to put an end to the long oppression of secular

[1] *Ordonnances des Rois de France*, vol. xiv, p. 2.

strife; and by the autumn of 1451 the English, driven from Normandy and Guyenne by a series of rapid successes, were left with no foothold in France beyond Calais and the forts of the Pale. If less conspicuous, the consequences in the sphere of internal development were not less important. Formerly the amusement of the feudal lord, war had become the business of the sovereign. Under the new system of enlistment which the ordinances established, the sovereign was placed in direct relations with his subjects without the intervention of the feudal seigneur. Holding out the prospect of congenial occupation, and filled by voluntary recruiting, the companies offered a career to the poorer nobility, who were thus taught to look to the King as the dispenser of remuneration and the fountain of honours and rewards. The whole of the new army received the King's pay, and was amenable to the King's officers. Whilst in these respects highly advantageous to the Crown, the reforms were commended to the nation by the promise of order and security which the new machinery held out and by the abolition of the old liability to irksome service under the unpopular feudal lord. The price at which these benefits had been purchased was not understood. 'The absolute control of the national force and the national revenue, which the action of the States-General of Orleans allowed the Crown to assume, enabled the monarchy to erect a despotism in France. Englishmen may hold that orderly government and national independence were dearly purchased by the sacrifice of all securities for constitutional liberty, but it is at least probable that, if they had ever found themselves in such an evil plight, they would have concluded the same bargain on the same terms.' [1]

The work which Charles VII had begun was zealously continued by his successor. With his unerring insight into essentials, Louis XI perceived that the age of feudal display and of individual prowess was yielding to a new time in which tactics would count for more than bravery, and victory would depend, not upon luck, but upon skill. He saw the importance of the rôle which in the new conditions would fall to the artillery and infantry, upon which the noble warrior looked down with scorn. He foresaw the

[1] R. Lodge, *The Close of the Middle Ages* (London, 1902), p. 353.

day when 'every man who did not fear death might be worth a baron on the field of battle',[1] when war would become 'a service for the leader, a career for the soldier. . . . The warrior could no longer be a vassal discharging a duty or the subject enrolled for a time. He would become the professional soldier, ready at a word to set out for the Lombard plains or the Calabrian plateaux, the general his sole master, his horizon bounded by the camp, victory his one ideal, bound to war for its own sake by the ties of ambition and honour, by reason of the gains it yields and the dangers it involves.'[2]

The military measures of Louis XI were directed primarily to the reform of the infantry. He wanted a permanent force of disciplined troops, upon whom he could depend in any emergency that might arise, and he did not find it in the infantry which had come into being under Charles VII's ordinance. Experience showed that that infantry was of small military value. It possessed all the defects of a local militia and none of the qualities by which amid a free and virile race such defects may often be more than half redeemed. The *francs-archers* were recruited among an unwarlike peasantry; they were seldom assembled for collective training; and they were a byword throughout the country for indiscipline and inefficiency. It was a grievance to them to be called to the colours, and they saw in active operations not so much an opportunity for service as an occasion for plunder. After Guinegate, where victory had been turned into defeat by the dispersal of the French troops in quest of booty, Louis determined to dispense with a force which had proved its worthlessness, and to organize an infantry upon new lines. The liability of the parish to support a *franc-archer* was commuted into a cash payment of 4*l.* 10*s.* a month, and the proceeds were employed to defray the cost of the new infantry force. This consisted of 16,000 men, divided into four corps, each under a Captain-General. Recruiting was carried out upon a regional basis, the corps being drawn from four main

[1] L. Susanne, *Histoire de l'Ancienne Infanterie Française* (Paris, 1849), vol. i, p. 44.

[2] P. Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines de la Réforme* (Paris, 1905), vol. i, p. 65.

districts; and these districts were in turn divided into four sub-areas, each with its own centre, where the troops of the area were collected periodically for review. No longer drawn from a pacific rural population, but composed of adventurers, French and foreign, the new foot were graded in classes according to their arms, and were trained in the duties of archers, arblasters, and pikemen. A great camp was formed at Pont-de-l'Arche, in which 1,500 men-at-arms, 2,500 gunners and sappers, and 20,000 foot were collected; and hither 6,000 Swiss were brought from Berne, in order that the infantry might be trained in the discipline and tactics which had conferred upon the mountaineers their military supremacy.

The cavalry establishment also benefited, though to a less extent, by Louis XI's fondness for method and organization. When the *compagnies d'ordonnance* had been established, arrangements had been made for their periodical inspection. The system which Charles VII had inaugurated was revised and strengthened by his son, who considerably expanded the functions of the inspecting officers. He arranged that every company should be reviewed quarterly, and that reports should be furnished upon the honesty and efficiency of the officers and upon the discipline, equipment, and temper of the men. Captains were ordered to engage cooks and bakers, tailors and shoemakers, farriers, semptresses, and nurses. A special corps was formed for the custody and transport of the baggage. A special order, that of Saint Michel, was founded to reward valour. The expenditure upon the army, which stood at 900,000 *livres* in 1470, increased by rapid strides, and amounted to 2,700,000 *livres* by the end of the reign.

In the ranks of the cavalry regiments which accompanied Charles VIII to Italy—the *compagnies d'ordonnance*, as they were called—was to be found the flower of a loyal and adventurous military aristocracy. Though a gradual process of transformation had begun, French society was still mainly feudal in its structure, its modes of thought, and its habits of life; and under feudalism 'everything in the habits of society conspired with that prejudice which, in spite of moral philosophers, will constantly raise the

profession of arms above all others'.[1] The gentleman was trained from childhood in all that made for proficiency in the use of arms; he was reared on tales of chivalry; and he was taught to look to the soldier's career as the only occupation fit for his rank and the only avenue to glory and rewards. Gargantua reflected the spirit of the age when he told his son that he must acquire knowledge in youth, because thereafter, 'as thou growest great and becomest a man, thou must part from this tranquillity and rest of study, thou must learn chivalry, warfare, and the exercises of the field'; [2] and the castles and manor-houses of France were full of budding d'Artagnans, eager to make their way in the world with no better endowment than a sword and a horse, a modest purse, and the parental benediction.[3] It was in these scions of the nobility that the King found the recruits for his heavy cavalry, the ranks of which he could not have filled satisfactorily in any other manner, for the efficient man-at-arms was the product of a long and costly training which none but the gentleman could afford. The force thus constituted possessed the merits and defects which might be expected of its constitution. It was impatient of control, individualistic and emulous of personal distinction, indifferent or actively hostile to the scientific spirit in the conduct of war, and deficient in the corporate sense and capacity for abnegation which the progress of that spirit would soon demand. Its heroes were distinguished, not by any qualities of leadership, but by the reckless courage which inspired the individual prodigies of valour that belonged to the dying age of chivalry, and the names that stand out in the annals of the earlier stages of Italian warfare are those of Bayard and Louis d'Ars, of Yves d'Alègre, and of the brothers, La Palice and Vandenesse. The constant study of these warriors and of the school to which they belonged was to preserve the conditions which had made the man-at-arms the decisive factor in military operations: in their attitude towards the infantry the contempt of the feudal gentleman for the plebeian was reinforced by the disdain of a superior for

[1] Hallam, *Europe during the Middle Ages*, vol. i, p. 189.
[2] Rabelais, trans. Urquhart and Motteux, vol. i, p. 193.
[3] See Lavisse, *Histoire de France* vol. v (i), pp. 29–30.

an inferior arm. Gunpowder they regarded as an outrageous infraction of the military code; firearms were the weapons of the coward, and it was intolerable that the noble horseman should be struck down from afar by the low-born foot-soldier. One famous leader made a practice of blinding and maiming every enemy taken with the new-fangled weapons in his hands, and Bayard, the mirror of chivalry, had a short way with arquebusiers, whom he hanged upon the nearest tree as a warning against the employment of devices which the gentleman deemed dishonourable.[1]

Though it might be true that prowess was thus the enemy of progress,[2] yet the fact remained that by the impetuous valour of her *gendarmerie* France enjoyed an incontestable superiority in the arm which still retained its cardinal importance in war. During the long drama upon which Charles' invasion of Naples was about to ring up the curtain, many a stricken field would afford convincing proof of the efficiency of the French horse. In the cavalry which marched into Italy under the banners of Charles VIII Guicciardini found the same qualities—the efficiency, loyalty, and desire for distinction—by which, in the opinion of a Venetian ambassador, the same arm was still characterized after the lapse of three-quarters of a century. 'In time of war', said the Venetian, 'countless lords and gentlemen of great bravery follow the King faithfully and with all their men. The cavalry so formed is of the greatest value to the sovereign, for all these nobles are warlike, able to support the cost of service, and ready to expend fortune and even life itself in the Royal cause. . . . There is all the difference in the world between mercenaries and those who contend for their Prince's glory. The former are kept to their duties by pay, and it is not often that their fidelity will extend to the giving of their lives for the paymaster's benefit. For the latter the one object is victory and the Prince's glory. Be it kingdom or be it republic, the country which looks to its own subjects to guard it is by far the best defended and upheld.'[3] Old captains who had seen service

[1] L. Dussieux, *L'Armée en France, Histoire et Organisation*, vol. i, pp. 293–4.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 294.

[3] Relazione of Marc' Antonio Barbaro, 1563: Tommaseo, *Relations des Ambassadeurs Vénitiens*, vol. ii, p. 6.

in the early Italian wars told Brantôme that it was in those operations that 'the *compagnies d'ordonnance* became so splendidly warlike, being fashioned and trained to arms by the continual wars that were fought in that time. . . . Thus did our Frenchmen grow martial at the expense of the Italians and Spaniards, of whom they killed many; they never met a foe they did not conquer; and the French *gendarmerie* was admired and feared throughout the whole world.' [1]

The cavalry were organized by lances and companies, the lance comprising in theory six men, and one hundred lances constituting a company. Originally the reunion of the feudal *chevalier* and his suite, which might comprise any number from five or six to fourteen or fifteen, the lance had always possessed a certain elasticity in its composition, and at different times the man-at-arms, the esquire, the shield-bearer, the *coustillier*, the valet, and two or three mounted archers had figured in its ranks. In the time of Charles VIII it consisted normally of the man-at-arms, two archers, and the esquire, with the addition of one or two pages or valets, who armed and waited upon the horsemen, and rarely took part in active operations. The rôle of the archers, who had once been altogether subsidiary to the man-at-arms, had grown steadily in importance; they were now nearly all gentlemen, awaiting promotion to the higher grade; and both in service and in equipment they were becoming constantly assimilated to the man-at-arms. The offensive weapons of the man-at-arms were the long lance, the sword, and the mace; he wore helmet with vizor, cuirass, arm and thigh pieces, sollerets, and gauntlets; and his sturdy horse was also enclosed in steel. So complete was the protection of the defensive armour that at Fornovo, where the Italian men-at-arms who had been unhorsed were attacked by the French valets with mattocks and axes, they suffered little or no injury except where three or four attackers concentrated their efforts upon the same victim.

Each company was commanded by a captain, who had under him a lieutenant, a standard-bearer, and other officers. The titular captain being almost always some great lord or distinguished man unable to discharge his

[1] Brantôme, *Œuvres*, ed. L. Lalanne, vol. ii, p. 367.

duties in person, the actual command of the company tended to pass to his representative, who was known as the *capitaine-lieutenant*. At the death of the titular captain it would often happen that his company would be split up, when his lieutenant would obtain direct command of a part of it, and some one who had signalized himself by his zeal and courage would be rewarded with the command of the rest. Thus, while some companies retained their full complement of a hundred lances, others came into being with eighty, sixty, forty, or even as few as twenty, lances. As the pay of a captain depended upon the number of lances in his company, the natural ambition of every leader of these smaller troops was to be permitted an increase in his numbers; a grant of five or ten additional lances was both a convenient and an acceptable means of rewarding good service; and in each part of a dismembered company there was a constant tendency to expand until the full strength of a hundred lances was once more reached.[1]

'The *ordinanza*, or Royal corps, consists at present of 3,500 lances, with three horses to the lance', wrote[2] the Venetian ambassador who visited France in 1492; 'the men-at-arms and their heavy horses are armed more richly and ingeniously than ours. The *ordinanza* also comprises 7,000 archers, all picked men of the highest efficiency. There are, further, 16,000 *mortes-payes*, . . . of whom some garrison fortresses, and some go campaigning. The pay of a man-at-arms with his three horses is 180 francs a year; that of an archer is 90 francs; and a *morte-paye* receives 60 francs; in each case the remuneration is paid quarterly without deduction upon condition of parading well armed and without any defect in equipment immediately before pay-day.'

The army with which Charles VIII invaded Italy was almost entirely destitute of light cavalry, considered as a separate arm, for prevalent military theories allowed to the lightly armed horseman no tactical value, and for the discharge of the one duty which might conveniently be assigned to them, that of reconnaissance, the presence of a handful of light horse was deemed an adequate provision.

[1] L. Susanne, *Histoire de la Cavalerie française* (Paris, 1874), vol. i.
[2] Albèri, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti*, Series I, vol. iv, p. 20.

In Charles' army, therefore, the light cavalry accounted for no more than 300 men out of a total of over 20,000. Like the men-at-arms, they carried the lance, sword, and mace, but since they were not primarily intended for use in the line of battle, their defensive armour was comparatively slight. In Italy the French would soon find themselves in contact with the ferocious and indefatigable Balkan horsemen whom the Venetians sent to battle under the generic name of Stradiots, and with the nimble *genétaires* whom Spain had evolved under the pressure of a stern necessity during her long Moorish wars. The feudal or semi-feudal theory and organization of the French army would be compelled to undergo a rapid modification in the light of that experience, which would demonstrate the necessity of organizing as a separate arm the elements of a light cavalry which existed in the *lance fournie*. At Fornovo the lance was employed as a tactical unit on the field of battle, and the light and heavy cavalry which it contained charged together in mixed formations.[1] In the wars waged by Charles' successors the archers were withdrawn from the lance for tactical purposes, and by their organization in separate companies France gained the arm of which she stood in need to oppose the Stradiot and the *genétaire*.

The lack of a reliable national infantry was a source of grave military weakness to France, as the possession of such a force was the basis of the power of her neighbour and rival, Spain. That the commons of France contained the raw material of which a spirited infantry might have been fashioned is evident from the martial temper which has often animated her people. At the close of the Middle Ages, however, that temper had long been suppressed by a feudal organization of society under which the third estate was held in subjection, and by the dominance of military theories which poured derision upon the popular arm. There could be small hope of maintaining the morale of troops who were no longer employed in battle, but 'left the plough for the enervating life of the garrison or the military promenade, and exerted their activities at the

[1] F. L. Taylor, *The Art of War in Italy*, 1494–1529 (Cambridge, 1921), p. 70.

expense of the inoffensive peasant '.[1] The *franc-archer* was called suddenly from home pursuits to discharge a burdensome duty which offered no hope of reward, and was sweetened by no prospect of glory. When called to the colours, he found himself enrolled in a motley collection of reluctant rustics, ill armed, untrained, without discipline, without a corporate spirit, without any incentive to emulation. Only in the border provinces, such as Picardy, Normandy, and Brittany, Gascony, and Dauphiné, where the martial spirit had been kept alive by the proximity of danger, was it possible to recruit an infantry in which some reliance could be placed.

'At this time', wrote Guicciardini,[2] 'the Kingdom of France, though very powerful in cavalry, copiously furnished with artillery, and most expert in the use of it, was very weak in native infantry, for arms and military exercises were confined to the nobility, and the commons, devoted to peaceable interests and occupations, and long unused to war, had thus lost their former martial qualities. By reason, too, of divers conspiracies and rebellions occurring in the kingdom, several former Kings, in fear of popular violence, had set themselves to disarm the people and divorce them from military pursuits. Thus the French no longer put any confidence in their own infantry, and went to war with trepidation, if their army did not contain a band of Swiss. Always of a fierce, untameable spirit, this people within the last twenty years had much enhanced its reputation, for, when attacked in force by Charles, Duke of Burgundy, who by his power and vigour had made himself a terror to France and all his neighbours, they had in a few months inflicted upon him three defeats, in the last of which he had met his end, either in the battle itself or in flight, for the manner of his death was obscure. In view, then, of their proficiency, and of the fact that with them the French had no rivalry, jealousy, or competition of interests, as with the Germans, the French engaged none but Swiss infantry, and never embarked upon a serious war without their co-operation.'

[1] A. Spont, 'La Milice des Francs-Archers (1448–1500)', *Revue des Questions Historiques*, vol. lxi, p. 444.

[2] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 150.

In the views here expressed Guicciardini had the support of another acute mind, which had studied closely the military conditions of the time. 'The infantry of France', said Machiavelli, 'is but indifferent: for as it is a long time since they were employed in any service, they must be supposed to have little or no experience. Besides, they are composed altogether of peasants and pitiful mechanics, who, having been long used to live in the most servile and abject subjection to the Noblesse, at last become dispirited and always behave like cowards and poltroons when they come to action: of which a thousand instances might be given. The King, therefore, makes little or no account of them, and seldom or never employs them. Indeed there are some regiments of Gascon infantry in the service, who are something better than the rest; for, as they live near the confines of Spain, they seem to have caught a little of the Spanish discipline and spirit; and yet, from what has been seen of them for many years past, they have behaved more like freebooters and marauders than good soldiers. In defending or assaulting towns, however, they make tolerable proof; but in the field they are good for nothing: in which they are very unlike the Germans and Swiss, who have no equals in open action, though they are very little esteemed when they are made use of either to storm or to defend a fortified place. The reason of which I take to be, that the method of fighting and discipline is very different in these two cases; and, upon this consideration, the King of France always employs either Swiss or German infantry in the field; because his Gendarmerie cannot be persuaded to put any confidence in the Gascons in time of action. But, if his infantry was as good as his Gens d'Armes, he would be able to make head against all the Princes in Europe.' [1]

The growing importance of infantry, on the one hand, and, on the other, the inability of France to supply her requirements in that arm from her own population, might have led to very unfortunate results, if Louis XI had not provided for the difficulty by his alliance with the Swiss. Large numbers of the hardy mountaineers had served under

[1] Machiavelli, 'Ritratti delle Cose della Francia', *Opere*, vol. vi, pp. 299–300; Farneworth's trans., vol. ii, pp. 495–6.

his standards, and though dismissed by Anne de Beaujeu as a concession to French self-respect and the prevalent demand for economy, they had soon been brought back under the pressure of the Breton war. At the close of the fifteenth century, from the time when the defeat of Charles the Bold's chivalry had demonstrated the potentialities of the despised infantry arm to the day when Spain would begin to dominate European battle-fields with an infantry trained on the Swiss model and become superior to its pattern, the Swiss occupied a unique position, and enjoyed a supremacy which no foot in Europe could venture to dispute. The English archers had, indeed, proved that there were weapons and tactics with which the footman could resist the onslaught of the mail-clad knight. But the utility of the archer was limited: his strength lay in defence; the offensive power of his weapons was small; and he was incapable of shock tactics. By reintroducing the pike, which had been discarded in favour of the bow and cross-bow, and by charging in compact squares trained to move swiftly without breaking formation, the Swiss evolved a system of shock tactics for unmounted troops which was destined to revolutionize the art of war.[1] For the first time in its experience feudal Europe encountered in the armies of the Republican mountaineers a spirit of disciplined self-confidence which the glamour of chivalry could not daunt, and an equipment and tactical organization against which the man-at-arms was powerless to contend. 'The true glory of the Swiss consisted, not in their long pikes, but in their discipline, their endurance, the war-like spirit born of their wars of independence, and the self-confidence preserved by the memory of their victories at Morgarten, Sempach, Morat, and Granson. The three thousand Swiss in the advance-guard at Fornovo were "the hope of the army".'[2]

In allying herself with the mountaineers and in enrolling them beneath her standards France had turned the new situation to the most favourable account; but that situation was essentially inimical to her interests. No country stood to lose as much as she did by a change in values

[1] F. L. Taylor, *The Art of War in Italy*, pp. 30–2.
[2] Boutaric, *Institutions militaires de la France*, p. 329.

which exalted the infantry, in which she was deficient, and depressed the cavalry, in which she was supreme. To employ the Swiss themselves to fight her battles was a palliative, but it was far from being satisfactory. So long as the enrolment of troops was dependent upon the good-will of a foreign power, there could be no security that the country would command an adequate supply. The need for securing such a supply might not improbably impose political sacrifices, and was fairly sure to involve a financial drain. Nor, when obtained, were these mercenaries a docile or amenable instrument. Admirable on the field of battle, when they chose to fight, they were unreliable, capricious, exacting, and occasionally treacherous. Contending for objects to which they were indifferent, and participating in disputes which left them cold, they desired the success of French arms mainly in so far as that success might tend to the punctual satisfaction of their demands for pay; and to those demands they adhered with a tenacity which was often a source of grave embarrassment to the paymaster. If for any reason their pay was not forthcoming—an event which in an age of slow communications might easily happen when they were employed upon a distant service, as in Naples—they would refuse to fight; they almost invariably demanded the place of honour on grand occasions; they would pick and choose between the duties assigned to them, performing this one and refusing that, undertaking this expedition and declining the other. By these exactions and caprices they might at any moment compromise the most vital French interests, whilst the repute of French armies was grievously injured by the behaviour of the Swiss, by their mutinous and quarrelsome temper, their drunken orgies, and their outrageous indulgence in pillage. Nor were these the only ill-effects of the employment of Swiss mercenaries by the Kings of France, in which Machiavelli[1] saw 'the occasion of all those dangers to which that kingdom is visibly exposed at this day; for by giving that preference to the Swiss, they have discredited and daunted their own soldiery, having entirely broken their infantry, and made their cavalry so dependent upon others, by accustoming them to fight always in

[1] *The Prince*, Ch. XII; Farneworth's trans., vol. ii, pp. 305–6.

conjunction with the Swiss, that they are now possessed with an opinion that they can do nothing without them. From hence it comes to pass, that the French are no match for the Swiss; and without their assistance they make no figure in the field against any other forces. So that the French armies are at present composed of mixed troops, partly mercenary and partly national; which, however, are much better in the main than either mercenaries or auxiliaries alone; but still much inferior to national forces only. . . . Without doubt the Kingdom of France would be invincible, if the institutions established by Charles VII were revived and improved.'

Whilst other countries might allege a superiority to France in infantry and an equality with her in cavalry, none could dispute her claim to supremacy in artillery, for none approached her in the number and quality of its guns, in the ingenuity of their mechanical features, in the speed with which they could be moved, or in the skill with which they were served. The progress of the French in gunnery dated from the improvements in manufacture and organization which the Bureau brothers had introduced in the time of Charles VII, and the work then begun had been carried to completion under Louis XI. The French guns were made of bronze, not of iron, and fired balls of metal, not of stone. The invention of improved methods of mounting, giving greater latitude for the recoil, had made it possible to increase the charge, and so to lengthen the range; and at the same time an advance in the methods of fire control had heightened the accuracy of the aim. Attention had also been paid to the gun-carriage, which was constructed to allow of increased mobility, whilst gun crews and teams were trained to manœuvre with rapidity and precision; and mobility was a characteristic of great practical importance in an age of execrable roads, when the progress of an army upon the march was regulated by the laborious movement of the heavy guns, much as the speed of a convoy is that of its slowest ship. The great cannons of the French, drawn by huge teams of sturdy horses at the pace of marching cavalry, were a revelation to the Italians, whose own unwieldy guns lumbered along on clumsy carriages behind the deliberate ox; nor had there ever been seen on an

Italian battle-field the like of the light guns, which came into action at the trot, and could change their position rapidly as the course of the engagement required.

Considerable as was the progress which the French had made in the construction and manipulation of artillery, guns had not yet, either in their own properties or in their tactical employment, reached the point where the possession of superior strength in artillery could compensate for deficiencies in other arms. When used in ranged battles, they did not as a rule produce any marked effect. This was because, despite the French advance in methods of casting and mounting and in means of transport, guns were still heavy, difficult to handle, and slow in use, and also because of the lack of tactical ability which invariably resulted in the guns being masked by the advance of troops on their own side after a few preliminary discharges. Their chief importance lay in their power to reduce fortified places that would have been impregnable by other means, and in the moral effect which they produced in an age when 'gun-powder is still sufficiently awe-inspiring to dominate the military imagination'.

Contemporary Italians, whose own guns were of small utility, were startled into apprehensive admiration by a sight of the French artillery. 'The Royal artillery', said Contarini in 1492, 'consists of bombards with iron projectiles, which, if of stone, would weigh about one hundred pounds; they are mounted on carriages with so admirable an ingenuity that they can fire without any emplacement or other preparation. There are also *spingardes*, mounted on carriages. This artillery is utilized in two ways: when camp is pitched, a rampart is made of the carriages, which renders the camp impregnable; and when some place is to be reduced, the bombards destroy the walls; this they do much more easily and quickly than our big guns could do it. It is said that, when King Louis took the field, thirty thousand horses were required to draw his artillery. In the present King's campaigns about twelve thousand horses have been wanted for that purpose.' [1]

'The French are taking with them a numerous artillery, all on carriages', wrote the Florentine ambassadors to their

[1] Albèri, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti*, Series I, vol. iv, p. 23.

master on the eve of Charles' departure for Italy. 'The guns are not too big, being of one hundred to three hundred pounds; the balls are of iron, which weighs more; the guns are made very heavy and strong in the breech, where the powder is put; and then they taper off into a narrowish mouth. In the centre are supports for making them fast on the carriages; each gun has its carriage, gunners, and balls, with a great number of charges of powder suited to the gun. The carriages make a park, when in camp. . . . When they reach a place, they take the beasts from the carriages, turn the guns round, and gradually push them forward, so that in a single day they can work their way up to the walls under cover of the carriages, without other protection; and when they come to a bombardment, thirty or forty guns open fire, with the result that the wall is soon reduced to powder. They say that their artillery can breach a wall eight feet thick, and though each hole may be small, yet the number is great, for from the time they begin, they do not stop a single moment day or night, so that the defence has neither rest nor leisure to make repairs. They have no doubt that they could dispose of Leghorn in one day and of Pisa in two; they mock at Ostia, and say they would be ashamed if they could not take it in forty-eight hours; and a bombardier who has been to spy upon Naples, is ready to stake his head on having the Castel Nuovo in two days; and though the French are by nature braggarts, yet Francesco della Casa and other Florentines, who have seen the guns with their own eyes, tell you things about them that make your flesh creep.' [1]

Another Italian, the historian, Giovio, thus describes the appearance of the French army, as it entered Rome in the fading light of a December evening, noting the sinister impression which it produced upon the minds of spectators.[2] 'First there went great bodies of Swiss and Germans, marching beneath their standards with measured pace, in perfect order, and with a certain degree of military dignity.

[1] Canestrini et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane*, vol. i, pp. 401–2.

[2] *Istorie del suo Tempo*, trans. L. Domenichi (1555), vol. i, pp. 53–5.

Their dress of divers colours was short and revealed their limbs; and with the plumes in their hats the best of them made a brave show. Their arms consisted of short swords and of ashen pikes ten feet long with small iron heads. About a quarter of them were armed with large axes that ended in a square spike, and these, with which they could either strike or thrust, they wielded with both hands; in their own language they called them halberds. To every thousand infantry there were a hundred arquebusiers, who fired leaden balls against the enemy. As they invariably fought in close formation, they made no use of corselets, helmets, or shields, only the captains and chief leaders who fought in the front rank wearing helmets and shoulder-pieces. Behind these came five thousand Gascons, and of these nearly all were arblasters, manipulating their metal cross-bows with admirable accuracy and rapidity of fire, but appearing rather shabby and ill accoutred by comparison with the Swiss, who far surpass them, not only in stature, but also in the splendour of their head-dress and their glittering weapons. After the infantry came the cavalry, marching in companies and bands, an epitome of the nobility of all France, with silken doublets, plumed helmets, and collars of gold. The men-at-arms were two thousand five hundred in number, and the light horse five thousand. They carried, as our men do now, a stout, fluted lance with a heavy point, and an iron mace. Terrible was the aspect of their horses, great, strong beasts, with their manes docked and ears clipped in the manner affected by the French, but suffering in appearance by the almost total lack of the dressed leather covering customary on Italian steeds. Each man-at-arms had three horses, a page who carried his armour, and two other attendants. . . . The light horse were armed . . . with great wooden bows, long arrows, helmet, and cuirass; and some carried short lances, with which to dispatch enemies unhorsed by the men-at-arms. All wore doublets exquisitely embroidered in silver with the devices of their captains, whereby their conduct in battle might be known. The King rode in the midst of four hundred mounted arblasters, among whom were a hundred brave and faithful Scots. Before him went a *corps d'élite* of two hundred men-at-arms, all French,

chosen for birth and valour ; these carried on their shoulders iron maces as big as axes ; they formed up around the King, when he went afoot, and, when he rode, preceded him in the character of men-at-arms, being mounted on great horses and richly apparelled in gold and silks. . . . So many were the squadrons of cavalry and infantry, accoutred, not for pomp and display, but with all their weapons, as though for warfare in the streets of Rome, that the spectacle aroused fear in every breast ; and the feeling was deepened by the effect of the many torches, in the uncertain light of which men, horses, standards, and arms were magnified. But that which above all else caused universal amazement and dread was the artillery ; there were thirty-six pieces on carriages, drawn by horses with incredible speed over any ground, rough or smooth. The majority were called cannons : these were eight feet long, containing six thousand pounds of bronze, and fired iron balls as big as a man's head. Then came the culverins, which were rather more than half as long, were smaller in the bore, and fired smaller shot. After these came the falcons, of varying sizes ; the smallest fired balls about the size of an orange. All these pieces were secured by their handles to great axles, being so disposed as to allow of adjustment for the discharge. The small ones were borne on two wheels, the large on four, of which the pair behind were detachable, to admit of greater speed. On smooth ground the gunners and drivers, urging their horses on with whip and voice, could move at the gallop, and attain a wonderful speed.'

Such, then, was the formidable instrument with which the French designed to carry out their programme of conquest ; but however excellent his cavalry, artillery, and Swiss mercenaries, the spectacle of Charles VIII's unopposed promenade through Italy must appear strange to one who has not acquainted himself with the inferiority of Italian troops and the inefficiency of the Italian military system. In one arm alone, the heavy cavalry, could Italy make a pretence of equality with her invaders. This arm, encouraged by the *condottiere* leaders for their own selfish reasons, had been developed as far as any military feature

was capable of development in the conditions which prevailed in the peninsula; for the man-at-arms was both a costly luxury and the product of a long training, and it suited the mercenary general that war should be waged with troops of high market value, for whom no substitute could be improvised. In Italian armies, therefore, the cavalry enjoyed the position of pre-eminence which the feudal structure of society had assigned to that arm in the armies of France, and superficially there was no marked difference between the heavy horsemen who followed the *condottiere* generals and those who rode beneath the banners of Charles VIII. In reality, however, as Guicciardini observed,[1] these two cavalries were composed of very different elements, and were animated by a very different temper. That which made the army of Charles formidable was not so much the number as the valour of its troops. Recruited among the nobles and the gentry, the ranks of the French companies were filled by men-at-arms whose armour and equipment were of the best, and whose whole lives had been an elaborate preparation for military service. All of them were subjects of the King at whose bidding they marched to war; from him they received their pay; to him they looked for the distinctions and rewards which were the guerdon of meritorious service; and in all of them, from the general and the captain to the trooper in the ranks, were to be found beside the sense of honour innate in a military caste the ambition, loyalty, and patriotism which inspire the prodigies of reckless daring, the miracles of grim endurance and noble self-sacrifice, that from time to time shed a transient illumination upon the dark annals of war, and do something to redeem its unlovely ferocity and its hideous waste. In all these respects the French differed entirely from their Italian opponents. There the man-at-arms was often of plebeian birth, and rarely was he the subject of the prince in whose quarrel he was employed. The basis of his service was pecuniary; he fought for the leader who offered him the highest pay; his engagement depended upon the captain's discretion; there was no higher source to which he could look for distinction or reward; and 'there

[1] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 60.

was little inducement either by nature or in circumstances to meritorious service '.[1]

' Nor was there a less marked difference between the Italian infantry and that under Charles' command; for the Italians fought, not in set and ordered ranks, but in loose order, usually retiring to take advantage of breast-works or trenches; whereas the Swiss, a most warlike people, who in a long military experience illustrated by many signal victories had revived the memory of ancient ferocity, marched to the combat in scientifically ordered squares, and, without ever breaking their ranks, presented as it were a wall to the enemy, with a firmness which upon ground spacious enough for their tactics made them almost invincible. With the same discipline and method, though not with the same effect, fought the French and Gascon foot.' Such was the verdict of Guicciardini.[2] ' The Italian infantry ', said another writer, Paolo Giovio,[3] ' was very inferior to the French, for, being raised for the most part hurriedly, it could not be compared in spirit, training, numbers, or equipment with the Swiss or Germans. . . . This was attributable in the main to the long-standing usages of the Italian captains, who were accustomed to maintain a numerous cavalry, and to pay an extravagant attention to it, and to despise the infantry, which they deemed adequate for attacks on cities, but thought futile in pitched battles. . . . This opinion endured for many years among ignorant princes, deceived by the bad advice of their paid captains, who took no trouble about the infantry, and throughout Italy went in for cavalry at a great cost to themselves and to their princes.'

It was the considered opinion of Machiavelli that the misfortunes which his country had suffered were due entirely to the reliance which she had placed in mercenary troops. ' Mercenaries and auxiliaries ', he said, ' are both unserviceable and dangerous, . . . for they are always disunited amongst themselves, ambitious, perfidious, insolent to their friends, abject to their enemies, without any fear of God, or good faith towards men; so that the person who confides in them is sure to be ruined whenever

[1] Guicciardini, *loc. cit.*
[2] Guicciardini, *loc. cit.*
[3] *Istorie del suo Tempo*, trans. L. Domenichi (1555), vol. i, p. 62.

he is attacked: they will prey upon him themselves in time of peace, and, when a war breaks out, they will sacrifice him to the enemy. The reason of this is, because they neither have any affection for him, nor principle of honour, nor any other motive to keep them firmly attached to his service, except their pay; which is not a consideration of sufficient weight to prevail upon them to die for him. They are ready enough to receive their pay whilst there is nothing to be done for it: but if they hear of an engagement, they will either desert beforehand, or run away in the day of battle. It would be a very easy matter to prove this, as Italy itself is now ruined by trusting so many years to mercenary troops; which at first indeed seemed very brave, and did some service to the Italian States that employed them against each other: but as soon as a foreign enemy appeared, they presently discovered themselves in their true colours. From hence it came to pass that Charles VIII of France made himself master of Italy, as it were with a snap of his fingers.'[1]

It would, indeed, have been strange if good troops had been produced under the vicious system of warfare which was practised by the *condottiere* leaders, a system of extravagance, corruption, and inefficiency. Italian methods of fighting bore much the same resemblance to real warfare as the professional football of our time bears to true sport. 'Gain was the sole purpose of these captains. They sold their service to the highest bidder, fighting irrespectively of principle or patriotism, and passing with the coldest equanimity from the camp of one master to that of his worst foe. It was impossible that true military spirit should survive this prostitution of the art of war. A species of mock warfare prevailed in Italy. Battles were fought with a view to booty more than victory; prisoners were taken for the sake of ransom; bloodshed was carefully avoided, for the men who fought on either side in any pitched field had been comrades with their present foemen in the last encounter, and who could tell how soon the general of the one host might not need his rival's troops to recruit his own ranks?'[2] As conducted by generals whose main

[1] *The Prince*, ch. xii; *Works*, trans. Farneworth, vol. ii, p. 290.
[2] J. A. Symonds, *Studies in Italy and Greece*, p. 199.

object was to prolong a lucrative employment and to husband valuable resources, and by mercenaries who were without affection for their masters and without interest in the issue of the campaign, war had become an affair of diplomacy and finesse, a game in which the avoidance of bloodshed was the test of skill. 'The principle of the offensive, in strategy or in action, was repellent to the Italian commander; the art of tactics consisted in avoiding the risk of either killing or being killed.'[1] The so-called battles were conducted under the rules of a carefully framed code, of which 'safety first' was the unacknowledged watchword and inspiration. Squadrons fought against one another until one of them grew weary or began to give way; another then advanced, and took its place; and only in the last resort were several squadrons employed indiscriminately in a general engagement; the battle went on in its own leisurely fashion throughout the entire day; and rarely had a decision been reached when the oncoming of night brought hostilities to a conclusion.[2] The notion of slaughter was alien to the spirit of this refined and courteous pastime, and if an unhorsed man-at-arms might occasionally get killed, it was only by one of those untoward accidents that were always apt to mar the perfection of the best conducted encounter. In the two years of bitter warfare from 1478 to 1480, in which all Italy was involved, not a single combatant of importance met his death in battle.[3] 'The wary captains, distinguished rather by the rapidity with which they changed sides than by any real qualities, and growing rich on the discords of princes, of deliberate purpose kept wars going among themselves. If obliged to come to a pitched battle, they never ended it with any great victory, and seemed to handle their mercenary forces rather as an instrument of gain than as a means of acquiring honour.'[4]

'The system of our Italian soldiery is this,' said the Florentine diarist, Landucci;[5] 'you turn your attention

[1] W. H. Woodward, *Cesare Borgia: A Biography*, p. 65.
[2] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 133.
[3] Armstrong, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, p. 161.
[4] Paolo Giovio, *Istorie del suo Tempo*, trans. Domenichi, p. 62.
[5] Cited by Armstrong, *loc. cit.*

to plundering in that direction, and we will do the same in this ; getting too near each other is not our game ; a village is bombarded several days, and succour is never sent. One day some of these Ultramontanes will have to come to teach you how to make war.' The day of that long and bitter tuition was at hand ; it would be ushered in by the trumpets which summoned the forces of the King of France to go forward to the passage of the Alps. The predilection of the French commanders for a vigorous offensive, the strenuousness of French methods, the reckless courage in battle, the pitiless pursuit of victory, the ferocity and blood-lust of the Swiss mercenaries, the devastating destructiveness of the French guns, filled Italy with horror. Accustomed to men like the Marquis of Mantua, to whom ' war was a highly profitable game of skill ', Italians found themselves suddenly at grips with men like Marshal de Gié, to whom ' it was a murderous horseplay '.[1] An outraged public opinion accounted for this shocking and terrifying contrast by attributing to the French the deliberate pursuit of a policy of ' frightfulness '. Every phase of the advance upon Naples would illustrate the moral effect of the conflict of reality with make-believe, and would prove conclusively that ' the new vision of what war might mean was in itself a powerful weapon in the hands of Charles VIII '.[2]

The projected conquest of Naples was designed primarily as a military undertaking, to be accomplished by land forces ; but some use would have to be made of ships, if only to transport the guns and stores which could not be hauled over the Alps ; and the possession by Naples of a fleet of war vessels compelled attention to the naval situation. That situation was such as might have given rise to anxiety in minds less rash and heedless than those by which the Neapolitan expedition had been conceived. At the close of the fifteenth century there had been a development of

[1] J. A. Symonds, *Studies in Italy and Greece*, pp. 199–200.

[2] W. H. Woodward, *Cesare Borgia*, p. 66. ' Entrò sì gran paura de' Francesi à ogn'uno, veggendo ch'essi guerreggiavano non al costume d'Italia humanamente, ma con barbara crudeltà molto sanguinosamente ' : Paolo Giovio, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

sea power here and there in the Mediterranean, as at Venice and in Spain; but very little progress had been made in European countries as a whole, and in France as little as in any country of similar size, wealth, and geographical opportunities. States without sea-borne trade had not yet grasped the importance of possessing a fleet for purely military purposes. With them the warship was still the vessel of commerce converted to belligerent purposes as occasion demanded; and, when hostilities were imminent, the creation of a navy was accomplished by the device of placing an embargo on merchantmen in port, which were then purchased or chartered for the service of the State. Thus the existence of a numerous mercantile marine was a condition precedent to the possession of a navy.

Such a state of affairs was unfavourable to the France of Charles VIII, for despite the recent acquisition of Provence and Brittany her mercantile marine was small. Moreover, it was to be found almost entirely in her Atlantic and Channel ports, and a fleet and a personnel drawn from those sources, even had they been readily available for service in the Mediterranean, were not at all suited to the conditions of warfare which obtained in those waters. The war vessels of the Channel and those of the Mediterranean might have belonged to different ages and distinct civilizations: Nelson would not have felt strange in the one, and Alcibiades would have been at home in the other. On the Channel and the ocean there plied vessels with masts and sails, which, though of small dimensions, possessed the essential characteristics of the sailing ship of later times. In Mediterranean warfare the preponderant part was played by the galley propelled by oars, which so far resembled the trireme of the ancient world that strategy was still governed by the same principles, and tactics were based upon the same conditions, as had prevailed in classical times. In the materials for such a warfare Charles VIII's kingdom was lamentably deficient. When Marseilles had fallen to the Crown as part of the Provençal inheritance, a few galleys had come into the King's possession, and a few more had been built there during the Beaujeu Regency; but these were of no account when compared with the navies of the maritime powers of the Mediterranean; and on her

small southern seaboard France possessed neither the resources for constructing an adequate fleet nor a sufficient maritime population wherewith such a fleet could be manned. The masted ship could be sailed in time of war by her ordinary civilian crew, and by the embarkation of some troops and guns she could speedily be provided with a belligerent complement. The galley, on the other hand, required a large crew of trained men, and the specialist knowledge essential to the service was not possessed by the seafaring population of the western and northern seaboard of France.

The onerous demands of these dual naval requirements were lucidly explained by a Venetian ambassador in a report which, though written in the following century,[1] applied with equal force to the conditions existing in 1494. 'As the seas which bathe France are of two kinds,' he said, 'so are her naval forces of two sorts. On the ocean, which in France is called the *marina di ponente*, the King . . . in time of war could equip as many vessels as he might please, for along the seven hundred miles of coast from Spain to Calais, especially in Normandy and Brittany, there is an unlimited number of commercial vessels and also of sailors experienced in those waters. In the Mediterranean, called in France the *marina di levante*, . . . the number of galleys is very small for so great a kingdom, which needs many more, especially as it is generally at war with Spain; for the Spanish territories being separated from one another, their strength can be made available only by sea power, troops being transferred from Sicily or Naples to Spain, and from Spain to Italy, as the need arises; and if France were to have the command of the sea, her situation between the two would enable her to prevent their passage, to her own great advantage.' In many respects, thought the ambassador, France was well situated to acquire naval power in the Mediterranean: there was an abundance of the requisite materials; she grew excellent shipbuilding timbers; she could find hemp and pitch; canvas was easy to get; biscuit and wine were plentiful; and there was 'no lack of galley-slaves, the kingdom being so populous,

[1] Relazione of Alvise Contarini, 1572; Albèri, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti*, Series I, vol. iv, pp. 235–7.

and justice condemning so many men that a part of them would suffice to keep afloat a good number of galleys'. There were, however, two causes which prohibited the adoption of an ambitious naval programme. Lack of money was one, and lack of crews was the other. 'For the Mediterranean coast of France is as short as the ocean coast is long, there being less than two hundred miles from the border of Italy to that of Spain, and there being in the whole of it no maritime centre but Marseilles; and although they profess that the mariners of the other coast can be used in these waters, yet there is a great difference between the two seas, and navigation upon them is wholly dissimilar, and as those mariners have no experience of galleys, which in all probability they have scarcely ever so much as seen, it is safe to assume that the thing cannot succeed, or at least cannot do so quickly. They have talked of building galleys, not only at Marseilles, but also on the ocean coast, and of bringing them to these waters; but the voyage is long and perilous, especially to new crews, as these would be; and if France were not on good terms with Spain and Portugal, the passage would be impossible, for they would be obliged to go through the Straits of Gibraltar, and to touch at all the harbours of Portugal and at all the Spanish ports in both seas.'

Charles VIII and his advisers thought that they could make amends for their naval weakness in the Mediterranean by using the Genoese fleet, and to secure the use of that fleet was one of the main objects of the alliance with Ludovic Sforza. The expedient might serve so long as France retained the friendship of Milan and had to reckon only with the hostility of one weak naval power. But the permanence of those conditions could not be guaranteed, and in fact, before a year was over, she was to be deserted by Ludovic and to be at grips with a coalition of all the naval powers of the Mediterranean. She then experienced the first effects of her hopeless naval inferiority in those waters, the one disabling weakness which would hamper her at every turn in the long struggle ushered in by Charles' expedition, which would persistently nullify her costliest efforts, and which in the end would blight all her hopes. So long as she adhered to a policy of expansion in Italy

without possessing the maritime strength which such a policy demanded, France must revolve unprofitably in a vicious circle: to hold any part of Italy, she must command the services of a foreign fleet; to command those services, she must hold a part of Italy. 'He who is not lord of Genoa and master of the sea can hardly rule in Italy,' said Brantôme.[1] 'So I once told the late King Charles, when he made me tell him of all the galleys I had seen in the possession of the King of Spain. . . . "And what should I do with so many?" he asked me. . . . "Sire," I answered him, "you would be the more feared, and as much by sea as you are by land. Had your Royal predecessors given as much heed to their fleets as to their armies, Genoa, Milan, and Naples might perhaps still be yours, for the Spaniards have got those States rather by sea power than by strength on land." . . . Such is the importance to France of the state of her navy.' Brantôme was wise after the event; but at least he had done what many of his compatriots had failed to do, and had interpreted aright the lesson to be learned from the disastrous failure of French policy in Italy.

[1] *Œuvres*, ed. L. Lalanne, vol. ii, pp. 29–30.

XII

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

While the clouds of war had been gathering menacingly beyond the Alps, the Government in Naples had prepared in haste to meet the coming storm. The old King, Ferrante, so long as he lived, had faced the situation with affected indifference, pretending that he saw no cause for fear, and declaring that, while the French enterprise must in any case be difficult of execution, his own position was not such as to invite attack. Should the French proceed against him by sea, they would find that he possessed a fleet well able to resist their own, a seaboard defended by many well-fortified harbours, and a kingdom purged of the overpowerful baronial class which in the past had made the way smooth for Angevin invaders. An attack by land would involve a long, difficult, and anxious progress, for the invader must traverse the whole length of Italy, and in every country upon the line of march his presence must excite the liveliest apprehension. And what, did he ever reach his objective, were the prospects of success? Naples was amply supplied with men-at-arms and horses, munitions of war, and money; and her armies would take the field under experienced leaders, who had proved their quality in many Italian conflicts. Nor was it to be supposed that his kingdom would be left to face the storm alone, for neither Italy nor Europe could afford to sit by with folded hands, while the most aggressive power in Christendom made so audacious an attempt to satisfy its predatory instincts.[1]

[1] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, pp. 27–9. The Neapolitan ambassadors told Maximilian that the King of Naples could rapidly collect 5,000,000 ducats, and had at his disposal 3,000 men-at-arms, 20 galleys, 20 ships, an infinite number of fortified places, and many good generals. 'Italy', they added, 'is so situated, and her good feeling is such, despite some discord or appearance of discord between her princes, that as soon as any Ultramontane comes and tries to oppress any part of it, the whole will act in concert, to prevent the infliction of any injury': Paolo

'So said Ferrante openly, . . . but, being a Prince of great prudence and experience, he was inwardly tormented by many secret fears.' In going to war with Charles VIII he would be embarking upon a contest with a very powerful and warlike enemy, much superior to himself in cavalry, in infantry, in artillery, and in wealth, and happy in the allegiance of a martial nobility eager to confront every peril for the glory and greatness of their King. He himself, on the other hand, as he well knew, was surrounded by hatred and suspicion; his dynasty was so much detested that his kingdom would welcome any change of ruler; his appearance of strength was largely deceptive; and whilst his accumulated treasure was inadequate to the cost of defence, his ordinary resources would vanish in a moment amid the disturbances which war would occasion. In Italy, where at one time or another every State had suffered by his arms or his arts, he had many enemies and no firm friends; in the rest of Europe his cause would evoke little sympathy except in Spain; and there, if the past were to be taken as a guide, he must expect nothing more substantial than 'lavish promises and a great appearance of preparation, followed by the most meagre and tardy effects.' [1]

A prey to these misgivings, Ferrante had gone to great lengths in the hope of buying off French hostility, and the ambassadors whom he sent to France during the last weeks of his life had been instructed to offer a recognition of French suzerainty and the payment of an annual tribute to Charles VIII. These overtures had been coldly received, and when after his father's death Alfonso had endeavoured to continue the negotiations, his envoys had been intercepted by Charles' orders and led back over the frontier. Unable to delude himself with any further hopes that safety could be procured by concession, Alfonso then set himself to prepare for resistance. He dismissed Ludovic's ambassadors from Naples, and recalled his own from Milan. He sequestrated the revenues of the Duchy of Bari, the Neapolitan fief from which Ludovic took his title. He called for the attendance of his vassal, the Count of

Negri, 'Milano, Ferrara e Impero durante l'Impresa di Carlo VIII in Italia', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series V, Anno XLIV, part ii (1917), pp. 455 and 527.

[1] Guicciardini, *op. cit.*

Caiazzo, a member of the Neapolitan House of San Severino, to whom Charles VIII had entrusted the command of the cavalry which was being raised for his service in Italy. Finally, orders were given to place the Neapolitan army on a war footing and to mobilize the fleet.

Alfonso inherited from his father a scheme of defence which in its boldness and simplicity was not unsuited to the magnitude of the crisis. Ferrante had seen the importance of preventing the enemy from gaining contact with his own disaffected subjects, and his project was to bar the French advance in its initial stages. To achieve this object, he had proposed to block the sea approaches by sending his fleet to occupy Genoa in conjunction with the Genoese exiles, and on land to throw the bulk of his forces into Romagna, where in co-operation with Piero de' Medici, who would hold the Tuscan frontier, they would confine Charles to the basin of the Po, and whence, if they were quick enough, they might advance into Lombardy before the French came, evict the unpopular Regent of Milan, and thereby deprive Charles of his main support in Italy. Based as it was upon the sound strategical principle that attack is the best means of defence, this scheme might well have met with success, if it had been begun without delay and carried through with resolution; and already Ludovic, in one of those fits of panic to which he was subject, saw himself menaced by advancing enemies with no hope that his French friends could come in time to save him. Rapid action, however, was a thing which it was not in Alfonso's power to achieve. In his naval and military preparations, which were necessarily upon a considerable scale, he encountered the obstacles and delays which in that age were the almost inevitable concomitants of an extensive mobilization, and before his fleet could be got ready to put to sea, the situation in Genoa had completely changed. On land, too, the conditions for a successful offensive could not easily or quickly be secured. Before the Neapolitan forces could be pushed forward to the Lombard border, the road must be made secure, and that could not be done until some means had been found to deal with the Colonnas in the Campagna, who had declared for France, and with the petty principalities of Romagna, which had not yet

declared for Naples. Moreover, it was essential to the success of the design that it should be carried out in close co-operation with the Pope and the Florentine Government, with whom it was accordingly necessary that measures should be concerted.

Alfonso and Alexander VI met on 14th July at Vicovaro, an Orsini stronghold on the Anio not far from Tivoli. In eloquent terms the King pressed upon the Pope the need for straining every nerve, if they were to maintain, not merely his own throne, but the independence of Italy, if they were to preserve the existence of all its States, and to save its civilization from destruction. He then offered his fleet and army for action in the common cause, and sketched his plan of campaign. Alexander, however, felt no enthusiasm for the Neapolitan proposals. Seeing an opportunity for getting the use of large armed forces, he wished to begin by crushing the Colonnas, who had long been a thorn in his side, and in whose territory the fugitive Cardinal Ascanio Sforza had lately sought and found an asylum. Nor was he satisfied that an advance through Romagna was altogether safe. It was true that Cesena had lately been recovered for the Papacy, and that Faenza was ruled by the young Astorre Manfredi, who was under Florentine protection. But in the event of an advance upon Lombardy it would be essential to the security of the lines of communication that he and his allies should be assured of the goodwill of Bologna, Imola, and Forli, and the rulers of those cities had adopted an attitude which filled His Holiness with misgivings. Imola and Forlì belonged to the young son of Girolamo Riario, and were ruled in his name by his mother, Caterina Sforza, a remarkable lady who 'contrived to combine with the astuteness of her sex, period, and country a quite masculine energy'.[1] Caterina well knew the strength of her position and the value of her alliance. Approached by both sides with competing offers, she dallied with each, but closed with neither, resolved to await the issue of events and to sell her friendship when she should see the way clear to obtaining the highest price in the safest market. In the same cautious and selfish temper Giovanni Bentivoglio at

[1] Delaborde, *L'Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*, pp. 370–1.

Bologna likewise awaited his chance to snatch his profit from the international disturbance.

In consequence of Papal objections and representations the Neapolitan plan of campaign accordingly underwent a considerable and an injudicious modification. Alfonso's army consisted of two thousand heavy cavalry, three thousand mounted archers and light horse, and a complement of foot, and he had intended that the whole of it should go forward into Romagna under his own personal command. This intention Alexander's fear of the Colonnas compelled him to abandon. Thirty squadrons of horse were withdrawn to take up a position at Tagliacozzo on the confines of the Abruzzi; Alfonso remained with this body, to watch over the safety of his own dominions and of the Papal States; and Virginio Orsini, his Constable, with two hundred men-at-arms and a part of the light horse, was posted in the Campagna, to keep watch upon the Colonnas. The rest of the army, strengthened by a contingent of Papal troops, and hoping to be further reinforced from Florence, advanced into Romagna under the command of Alfonso's son and heir, Ferrantino, Duke of Calabria, a brave and popular Prince of twenty-five, with whom there marched three experienced advisers in the persons of Niccolò Orsini, Count of Pitigliano, Alfonso d'Avalos, Marquis of Pescara, and Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, a distinguished Milanese soldier, who in his hatred of Ludovic had left his country to take service under the Neapolitan Crown.

Ferrantino moved forward slowly, and presently found his progress stopped entirely by continued difficulties with regard to Imola, Forli, and Bologna. At Borgo San Sepolcro he was met by Piero de' Medici, whose enthusiasm, something damped by fear of the French, he contrived to rekindle, and by whose influence Caterina Sforza and Giovanni Bentivoglio were at last persuaded to declare in favour of Naples. The advantage of their adhesion, however, was neutralized to a large extent by the waste of time in securing it. Not only had the French advance-guard under d'Aubigny entered Italy and joined hands with the Milanese troops under the Count of Caiazzo, but already these united forces had taken up their station in Romagna,

conveniently based upon the friendly possessions of Ferrara in the valley of the Po, and so disposed as effectually to bar the path of an advancing enemy. On land the chance of striking a damaging blow at the French through their Milanese confederate had thus been seriously impaired, if not wholly lost.

On the sea the same want of resolution was attended by consequences still more unfavourable. Partly as the result of King Ferrante's preparations, and partly through his own exertions, Alfonso was in possession of a fleet as powerful as any that had been seen for years on the western coasts of Italy: thirty-five galleys, eighteen large ships, and numerous small craft lay ready equipped in the Bay of Naples; an adequate supply of guns was available; and troops were detailed for service in the fleet. If employed against Genoa in conjunction with the exiled party before Charles and Ludovic had been able to complete their naval preparations, this armada should have been amply powerful enough to reduce Genoa, and thereby at a blow to cripple Charles' enterprise by depriving him of his naval base and of the use of the Genoese fleet, and to throw open another route for operations against the Milanese. Great importance was attached to the design by Alfonso, and in secret conferences with Cardinal Paolo Campo-Fregoso, the exiled Doge, he had carefully elaborated the details of the operation. The Cardinal promised the assistance, not only of the party of which he had long been the head, but also of another faction which under the leadership of Obietto del Fiesco possessed a large following in Genoa itself and all through the Genoese Riviera. He undertook that with the help of Alfonso's fleet these discontented factions would overthrow the Government of the Adorni and drive out the Milanese garrison.

Don Federigo, the King's brother, took command of the fleet. Precious weeks were lost before it was ready to put to sea, and in the respite thus afforded a good deal was done to make Genoa safe. A gifted branch of the San Severino family had taken service under Ludovic, and he had found among them some of his most trusted counsellors, ablest generals, and most accomplished courtiers. Two of these entered Genoa at the head of substantial reinforcements,

and by this exhibition of strength, as well as by presents and promises made in the name of Ludovic, they were able to confirm the loyalty and to stimulate the courage of the Adorni, of Giovan Luigi del Fiesco, brother of the exiled Obietto, and of many other influential Genoese. Work on the ships which were being equipped in the port was pressed forward, and many were got ready for service; French vessels began to arrive from Marseilles; the Bailli of Dijon, who had been recruiting in Switzerland, marched in at the head of two thousand mountaineers; and finally, in the very nick of time, at the moment when the Neapolitan sails were first descried from the Ligurian coast, the Duke of Orleans, appointed by Charles to the naval command-in-chief, entered the city. The task before Don Federigo thus turned out to be something very different from that which he had been led to expect. He had come under the impression that he had but to show himself, when the plum would fall into his lap, or at least would easily be gathered for him by willing hands. He found that his objective was heavily garrisoned, covered by a fleet in some respects superior to his own, and ready at all points to deal with internal revolt and external aggression; and with the prospect of stern work before him he decided to haul off and reconsider his plans.

Obietto del Fiesco had assured the Neapolitans that the whole Genoese Riviera was full of his adherents, who would rise as one man upon the slightest provocation. In the expectation of effectual support in this quarter Federigo accordingly determined to begin operations with an attack upon Porto Venere, a small fortified harbour, which commanded the entrance to the Gulf of Spezzia, and was thus regarded as a convenient base. Again he arrived too late: Gian Luigi del Fiesco, the adherent of the Adorni, had used his influence to preserve the fidelity of the little city, and the arrival of four hundred infantry had furnished a stronger argument in the same cause. Accordingly, when Federigo's landing-parties appeared beneath the walls, they found themselves stoutly opposed; and after some hours of unsuccessful fighting the Neapolitan squadron found it necessary to draw off to Leghorn, to refit and take in reinforcements and supplies. These operations being com-

pleted, Federigo put to sea again in the beginning of September. His intention was to effect a landing at Rapallo, a coastal village some twenty miles from Genoa. Being neither fortified nor garrisoned, Rapallo could offer no obstacle to disembarkation, and in due course Obietto del Fiesco was put ashore with 3,000 infantry and a body of his own partisans. He occupied Rapallo, and proceeded to fortify his position.

In the restless and fickle temper of Genoa and her dependent territories the presence of an armed enemy upon the coast was a source of danger which it was impossible to ignore, and, as soon as Obietto's landing became known to the Genoese Government, measures were promptly put in hand for dealing with the peril. It was decided to proceed against the invaders both by sea and by land. By land the two San Severino brothers were to march at the head of their Milanese troops; a Genoese contingent was to go with them under Giovanni Adorno, a brother of the Governor of Genoa; and they were also to be accompanied by a body of Swiss under the Bailli of Dijon and the Sieur de Piennes. By sea Orleans was to make for Rapallo with his whole force, which consisted of eighteen galleys, six galleons, and nine large vessels, and he was to take with him the rest of the Swiss infantry, numbering a thousand men. So far as possible, the movements of the two forces, naval and military, were to be synchronized, so that a joint attack might be delivered upon Obietto's position.

As the Neapolitan fleet was still at Rapallo when Orleans sailed from Genoa, it seemed as though the projected attack upon Obietto must inevitably lead to a heavy naval engagement. Don Federigo, however, was not disposed to encounter the risks of battle: the French ships being more mobile than his own, and their guns more powerful, he ran the risk of being taken at a disadvantage, if he remained in the bay; and he may well have thought that it was not the part of prudence to hazard one of the bulwarks of his brother's throne in defence of a log fort on the coast of Liguria. He therefore withdrew as his enemy approached (5th September), and no opposition was offered to Orleans as he drew in to the shore, got the enemy position within range of his guns, and landed his

Swiss, who joined hands with the troops which had come by land. Outside Rapallo, in the direction of the attacking force, there lay a small piece of open ground, stretching to the sea; down the side of it flowed a little stream, crossed by a bridge. This bridge Obietto's men had fortified and were holding in force, 'aided by the advantage of the site, for in all this country the steepness of the ground is the best defence'.[1] The nature of the ground was unfavourable to the attackers especially in this, that it deprived the Swiss of much of their value by the obstacles which it placed in the way of their favourite method of fighting, and for some time it seemed as though the assault upon the bridge would be beaten off. But if the advantages of the site were in favour of the defence, their enemy had for them the advantage of superior numbers and of the support of Orleans' fleet. Attacked impetuously by 'many peasant adherents of the Adorni, expert in the warfare of their rugged locality',[2] and taken in flank by the fire of the ships, Obietto's men began to fall slowly back across the open ground towards the village of Rapallo. Here for a time the fighting was still more lively than it had been at the bridge, and the issue of the day was still undecided when news reached Obietto of a threatened attack upon his rear by a fresh body of enemy troops under his brother, Gian Luigi. Upon receipt of this intelligence Obietto gave up the game for lost and took to his heels; whereupon his men broke and fled for the adjoining hills. They lost upwards of a hundred dead in the fight and in the retreat, including Obietto's son; and amongst the prisoners were Giulio Orsini, a relative of Alfonso's Constable, and Fregosino, a son of Cardinal Campo-Fregoso. Of the fugitives a few escaped down the coast, and were picked up by Federigo's ships, which then withdrew ingloriously to their base at Leghorn. In the savage conduct of the Swiss, who killed prisoners in cold blood and sacked Rapallo with indiscriminate brutality, Italy got a foretaste of the warfare which a barbarian invader was about to wage within her confines.

News of the victory reached Charles as he entered Asti, and it was but natural that he should repeat it jubilantly to

[1] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 57. [2] *Ibid.*

the home Government, for the menace to Genoa had been dispelled for good and all, and the upshot of the first trial of strength seemed to augur well for the future success of the campaign. Charles was in high spirits. 'At Turin', he wrote,[1] 'I saw my cousins, the Duchess of Savoy and her sister, and upon my word I assure you that I seem still to be in France, so warmly am I welcomed. Never was I better received: the country is full of people eager to greet me, to hand over the keys of their towns, and to offer gifts of jewellery; and the streets are decorated. Indeed, everything is done for me that could be done.' Bianca, the Regent, had intended to welcome the King as he entered Savoy, but at the moment when Charles left Briançon to cross by Mont Genèvre into her territory, she was incapacitated by a sudden indisposition. The splendour of Charles' reception in her capital was intended to make amends for this involuntary discourtesy. The King entered Turin on 5th September. As he passed through streets gay with hangings of cloth of gold and silk, he witnessed many representations of sacred and profane tales, and the prominence among them of real or legendary exploits of Charlemagne was a form of delicate flattery well suited to the Royal taste. The Regent herself, as became a widow, was robed severely, but the sombre hues of her dress and of the fittings of her apartments threw into higher relief the crimson and gold of her children's attire and the gay dress and dazzling jewels of her attendant ladies and courtiers. The castle was given up wholly to the King's use, Bianca retiring to the episcopal palace; the chief French seigneurs were entertained by her leading courtiers; and the rank and file of the army were lavishly regaled at public banquets. On the following morning, before he left for Chieri, where the same warmth of welcome awaited him, Charles was presented with a sum of 12,000 florins, which Bianca had raised by pledging her jewels, and was also furnished with a loan of 30,000 florins, which she had begged or borrowed from tax-collectors and bankers.[2]

At Asti the Duke of Ferrara and Cardinal Giuliano della

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, p. 91.

[2] F. Gabotto, *Lo Stato Sabaudo da Amadeo VIII ad Emanuele Filiberto*, vol. ii.

Rovere were waiting to receive the King; the Duke of Orleans arrived from Genoa, to give an account of his victory at Rapallo; and Ludovic il Moro came from Milan, accompanied by Beatrice d'Este, his fair and sprightly wife, and by the eighty ladies of her suite, a select company of the rank and beauty of Milan, who enchanted the susceptible monarch, and all of whom after the French fashion he gallantly embraced. Then there occurred an unfortunate mishap which turned joy into anxiety, and threatened for a moment to imperil the whole campaign. On 13th September Charles fell ill, and for a time was unable to leave his room; either, as seems probable, he had contracted small-pox in a mild form, or, as some believed, he was paying the penalty of his dissolute habits of life. His illness, whatever its nature, revived the hopes of those who had never liked the enterprise or ceased to look for pretexts for getting it abandoned; the old arguments were produced once more at a Council board over which the King no longer presided; and the Duke of Orleans began to play with the notion that the French forces might after all be diverted from the subjugation of distant Naples to the recovery of his Visconti inheritance in the neighbouring Milanese. Charles presently recovered, however, and once more the opposition to his schemes melted away in the heat of an enthusiasm which emerged as glowing as ever from the transient eclipse of the sick-room. The Regent of Milan breathed freely again after a moment of alarm. 'Have no fear of this enterprise, Sire', was his assurance to the King.[1] 'In Italy there are, as we reckon, three great powers. One, Milan, is on your side. Another, Venice, will not budge. Thus you will have to do only with Naples, and your predecessors have often enough got the better of us all, when united. Believe me, I will help to make you greater than was ever Charlemagne; and as soon as you have got this kingdom of Naples, we shall easily drive the Turk out of his empire of Constantinople.'

By 7th October Charles was well enough to travel, and on that day he left Asti for Casale, where he was entertained by the young Marquis of Montferrat. Ludovic, who thought him useful as an enemy of Naples but highly

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 144.

undesirable as a neighbour in Lombardy, was eager to see him press on southwards without delay, and was far from pleased when he announced his intention of visiting the Regent's palatial country place at Vigevano, and then of going to see his cousin, the titular Duke of Milan, who was lying ill in the castle of Pavia. It was difficult to foresee the effect of such a meeting upon the kind-hearted and impulsive monarch, and Ludovic submitted with so ill a grace as to arouse some suspicion in the mind of his guest: at Vigevano, and again at Pavia, Charles insisted upon having all the keys given into his custody, and surrounded his quarters with guards, as though he were in a hostile country. When Charles reached Pavia and saw his cousin, it became clear that the Regent's apprehensions had been groundless. The misfortunes of Gian Galeazzo 'touched his heart, but did not affect his policy',[1] and it was in vain that Isabella of Aragon, thinking more of her father's peril than of her own grievances, threw herself at the feet of a monarch who was too far committed to his design against Naples to be turned from his purpose by a woman's tears.

After inspecting the marvels of the Certosa on 16th October, Charles left Pavia for Piacenza, escorted by a gay cavalcade of Milanese courtiers and by an imposing array of Ludovic's mounted troops with standards flying and bands playing. He had not been at Piacenza long when he received news of the death of Gian Galeazzo, which occurred on 21st October. On the pretext of attending the funeral, Ludovic took a hasty farewell, and hurried off to Milan. Having reached the capital, he summoned a meeting of his supporters, and suggested that they should proclaim his dead nephew's infant son as Duke in his father's stead. After rejecting this proposal on the ground that it would be highly imprudent to entrust the government to a child in a time of difficulty and danger, the meeting proceeded to urge upon the Regent the vital importance of committing the care of the State to his own experienced hands. With affected reluctance he consented to accept a position which had been the secret object of a lifelong ambition.

More than a year had passed since Ludovic had first approached the King of the Romans with the suggestion

[1] Cipolla, *Storia delle Signorie Italiane dal 1313 al 1530*, vol. ii, p. 702.

that the investiture of Milan should be granted to him in return for the hand of Bianca Maria with her dowry of 400,000 ducats. Though the suggestion had been accepted, and the marriage solemnized, the formal grant of the investiture had been delayed, and it was not until the time when the French began to enter Italy that Maximilian had fulfilled his part of the contract and issued the documents that formally conferred the Duchy upon Ludovic and his heirs male. Handed to the Milanese representatives at Antwerp on 5th September 1494, these documents reached Milan during the last days of Gian Galeazzo's life. The Regent, therefore, might be thought singularly happy in the occasion of his nephew's end, and in that age an opportune death was usually attributed to the instrumentality of him who derived benefit from it, particularly in Italy, where so many fortunes were notoriously founded upon the judicious employment of the hired dagger or the poisoned cup. It was thus to be expected that rumour should busy itself with the fate of the young Duke of Milan. 'Kept in prison by his uncle . . . he died no less suspiciously than the little princes in the Tower. He left behind him a son four years old, his legitimate successor. But, with ominous prevision, a year before this time Ludovic the regent had negotiated with the Emperor to obtain the reversion of the duchy. . . . Every one believed that the young man had died of poison.'[1] 'It was put about by many', said Guicciardini,[2] 'that Giovan Galeazzo's death was the consequence of sexual excess; nevertheless, it was universally believed throughout Italy that he had died, not of any natural infirmity, nor of incontinency, but of poison; and Teodoro da Pavia, one of the Royal physicians who was present when Charles visited him, alleged that he had observed most manifest evidence thereof. Nobody doubted that, if poison had been given, it was the work of the uncle, not content with a Regent's authority, but consumed by the usual longing of the great for titles and honours, and persuaded that the death of the legitimate Prince was necessary for his own safety and his children's succession, and thus desirous of transferring to, and establishing in,

[1] *English Historical Review*, vol. iii (1888), pp. 281–2.
[2] *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, pp. 64–5.

himself the Ducal power and title; by which desire his nature, ordinarily humane and averse from bloodshed, had been constrained to this wicked deed. Most people believed that this had been his intention from the moment when he first began to treat for a French descent into Italy, thinking that no time could be so opportune for such a crime as the moment when the presence in the State of the King of France with a great army would hinder in all men the inclination to resent it. Others believed it to be a sudden impulse, born of a fear lest the King with characteristic French impetuosity should suddenly determine to liberate Giovan Galeazzo from subjection; moved thereto by relationship, or compassion, or a notion that it would promote his own safety that this State should be in the hands of his cousin rather than in those of Ludovic, whose loyalty many great persons in his entourage lost no opportunity of impugning. But Ludovic's action in obtaining the investiture in the preceding year and getting the Imperial grant specially sent off just before his nephew's death points rather to a premeditated and deliberate design than to a sudden resolve suggested by the presence of danger.'

The voice of slander finds willing listeners in a censorious world, and the more eminent a man's station, the stronger is the probability that he will be accused of vice or crime. It is possible that Ludovic murdered his nephew, but the malicious chatter of contemporaries is wholly unsupported by evidence; nor does there appear to be much justification for the view of some modern writers [1] that Ludovic, if not actually guilty of assassinating his nephew, yet had treated him so badly as to be morally responsible for his untimely end. Gian Galeazzo had enjoyed indifferent health during the greater part of his life, and of recent years he had been visited by more than one severe illness. In January 1483 he had suffered from a sharp attack of colic, with rapid changes of temperature. The years 1484, 1487, and 1490 had each been marked by renewed illnesses of a more or less grave kind. For months before the end his health had been steadily deteriorating, and as early

[1] e.g. Cipolla, *op. cit.*; W. H. Woodward, *Cesare Borgia, A Biography* (1913).

as the summer of 1494 his wife's anxiety had prompted her to send to Naples, to request the attendance of the Royal physicians. Finding him suffering from weakness of the stomach with colics and vomitings, these advisers enjoined a rigorous diet and abstinence from alcohol; but this prescription the patient persistently ignored, for his natural inclination was towards an excessive indulgence in food and drink, and he would avail himself of every temporary amelioration in his condition to repeat the folly which had provoked the last attack. The reasonable inference from the facts seems to be that Gian Galeazzo succumbed to chronic gastro-enteritis, stimulated to a fatal intensity by his own suicidal intemperance.[1]

It may be objected that the theory of a natural death accords but ill with the singularly opportune arrival of the grant of investiture, and it must be admitted that, when Ludovic purchased the Imperial parchments at a price which long crippled his finances, he did not do it for the pleasure of beholding Maximilian's signature or of admiring the penmanship of the Imperial secretaries. He must have intended to turn his costly bargain to account in the event of his nephew's death, and the state of Gian Galeazzo's health had long been such as to make that event a probability for which the Regent must be prepared. Ludovic's actions furnish evidence that there were contingencies in which he was minded to look after his own interests. But as regards the fate of Gian Galeazzo the grant of the investiture, if opportune in its arrival, was affected by a condition which was awkward for Ludovic on the supposition that he was only waiting for it to poison his nephew, for Maximilian expressly stipulated that the investiture should not be divulged until the Feast of St. Martin. Yet this condition Ludovic accepted without demur, and loyally observed, resting his title for the time being upon the invitation of the councillors and the acclamations of the people. If this be borne in mind, some hesitation will be felt in assuming

[1] See C. Magenta, *I Visconti e gli Sforza nel Castello di Pavia*, vol. i, 1883; F. Malaguzzi Valeri, *La Corte di Lodovico il Moro*, vol. i, 1913. For recent conclusions incriminating Ludovic see Felice Fossati, 'Lodovico Sforza avvelenatore del Nepote?' *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series IV, vol. ii, 1904; Achille Dina, 'Isabella d'Aragona Duchessa di Milano e di Bari', *ibid.*, Series V, anno XLVIII, 1921.

a sinister significance in the coincidence of the arrival of the Imperial grant of investiture with the death of Gian Galeazzo and the assumption by Ludovic of the Ducal title.

To the historian of Charles VIII's expedition, however, the question of Ludovic's guilt or innocence is of less importance than the effect which these events produced upon the minds of his French allies. That there was already a lack of cordiality had been demonstrated by the attitude which the King had taken up at Vigevano and Pavia, and in the tragedy of the young Duke's death the King's companions saw a confirmation of the suspicion with which they already regarded the Regent of Milan. By that tragedy they had been profoundly moved. Everything in Gian Galeazzo aroused the sympathy of the high-spirited nobles who had come into Italy with the King: he was a reigning Prince; he was nearly related to their own sovereign; he was the husband of a beautiful and unfortunate wife; he was devoted to the pursuits which formed the chief interest of their own lives. Accepting without question the current suspicions of Ludovic, they asked themselves what reliance could be placed in the good faith of such an ally, or to what abyss of treachery so black a villain might not stoop. They could not understand how Charles could maintain his alliance with the murderer, or refrain from thrusting him from his usurped station, so as to install in his place either the heir of the murdered man or his other cousin, the Duke of Orleans, by the vindication of whose rights the State of Milan would be placed in safe French hands. They did not see that Charles, even if he felt it, could not safely indulge a righteous indignation; nor did they pause to consider that, with Piero de' Medici and the Pope actively hostile, and Venice maintaining a neutrality which became less and less benevolent as she experienced the consequences of a French invasion, he could ill afford to dissolve his partnership with an astute and experienced confederate. It was not until a year later, when he had quarrelled with Ludovic, that Charles ventured to give any indication of his belief in the theory of foul play. 'At Pavia', he then wrote,[1] 'we found the former Duke of

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, p. 280.

Milan convalescent and in fairly good health, but entirely bereft of liberty. And at Piacenza, a day's distance from Pavia, Signor Ludovic told us that the said Duke of Milan was dead. Of what he had died he did not say. Yet the end was sudden. He took his leave of us to attend the obsequies at Milan, and there he got himself made Duke, wresting the Duchy from the little boy whose guardian he was.' From this it would appear that, if at the time Charles did not display resentment, it was rather out of a prudent regard for his own interests than from any belief in the innocence of his ally; in reality, his secret feelings had been deeply influenced by the attitude of his entourage; and Guicciardini was not far wrong when he surmised that 'the use of poisons, common in many parts of Italy, being a crime almost unknown among the Ultramontanes, it was likely that Charles and all his Court would not merely suspect the good faith of Ludovic, but would regard with horror the mere mention of his name'.[1]

At Piacenza it became necessary for Charles finally to determine upon a plan of campaign, a subject which had been constantly discussed since his first meeting with Ludovic at Asti. Three courses were open to the French: they might embark in Orleans' fleet at Genoa, and proceed direct by sea to Naples; or they might take the great high road which ran by Bologna and Forli to Rimini and thence along the coast by Pesaro and Ancona into the Abruzzi; or they might cross the Apennines, and march upon Naples by way of Florence and Rome. Not much hesitation was felt in rejecting the sea route, and it was certainly an objection to an invasion by sea that Don Federigo's fleet, though it had retired ingloriously from Rapallo, was still in being in Neapolitan waters and likely to exert its utmost strength to hamper an invader. Of the two land routes, that which traversed Bologna and the March was both easy and direct, and the difficulty which the Aragonese forces had experienced in holding the Franco-Milanese advance-guard in check showed that the main body would have no trouble in forcing a passage. But it was a serious objection to this line of advance that the army which adopted it would have no opportunity of dealing

[1] *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 65.

with Alfonso's allies in Florence and Rome, and it was thought essential to remove these menaces to the lines of communication before the attack upon Naples was begun. A visit which Piero de' Medici's exiled cousins paid to Charles at Piacenza helped to bring about a decision in favour of the Tuscan route. They assured the King that Florence was French at heart, declared that Piero had incurred great unpopularity by his alliance with Alfonso, and represented that it would be easy to effect a change of government in the city as soon as the King's forces should show themselves in its vicinity. Not at all sorry to combine the pleasure of punishing Piero for his hostility with the advantage of dealing with Alfonso and his friends one at a time, Charles finally made up his mind to cross the mountains, and proceed by way of Florence to Rome.

This decision being taken, the French went forward, with their advance-guard under Montpensier and the main body under the command of the King himself, passed the Apennines to Pontremoli on the Magra, the river which formed the boundary between Genoese and Tuscan territory, and effected a junction with the Bailli of Dijon's Swiss, who came by land from Genoa, and with the heavy artillery, which was brought by sea to Spezzia. The first Florentine place met with was Fivizzano, a small fortified town, which was summoned to surrender. Upon its refusal to do so, it was taken by storm and ruthlessly sacked, the whole of the garrison and many civilian inhabitants being put to the sword. Following closely upon the butchery at Rapallo, the sack of Fivizzano added another to 'the novel and terrifying episodes' which were beginning to fill Italy with dismay.

Apart from the moral effect, the capture of Fivizzano was of little importance, and had the Florentine defence been characterized by a spark of energy, the situation of the French might have been rendered extremely unpleasant. In the narrow and sterile belt which they had entered it would be impossible for a large army to live off the country, and almost impossible to provision it for more than a few days from external sources of supply. Moreover, should the autumn rains come—and they might be expected to begin at any moment—the French would inevitably suffer greatly

from the unhealthy nature of the district. It was therefore essential that their progress should not be impeded, for delay would spell something very like disaster; yet athwart the one practicable route lay the small but strongly fortified city of Sarzana, the capture of which was thought to be very difficult, and on a rocky eminence above the town was perched the fortress of Sarzanella, which was believed to be impregnable. The reduction of these places, if adequately garrisoned and firmly held, might have taxed the resources of an army, however large, and the powers of an artillery, however excellent; and although it was open to the French to mask Sarzana and continue their advance, it would be imprudent from a military point of view to leave such an impediment to a line of communications already imperfect, and politically inexpedient to shirk an attack upon the first important stronghold which they had encountered. 'The geographical importance of this town was out of all proportion to its size. It commanded the usual route from Milan to Florence. There was little or no landward communication parallel to the sea-coast south of Genoa. Travellers left the Aemilian road at Parma, and passing the mountains descended by Pontremoli, the *Pons Tremulus* of the Romans, to Sarzana, whence the road led through a narrow plain between sea and mountains. Thus the possession of Sarzana could check invasion from the north. . . . Hard by, moreover, stood the fine fortress of Sarzanella upon a commanding hill, built by the great Ghibelline soldier Castruccio Castrocani. The strength of this castle excited . . . admiration, as do its ruins that of the traveller of to-day.' [1]

Happily for the French, the defence of Florence, which the will of a united people could have rendered formidable, depended almost wholly upon the spasmodic activity of the erratic and irresolute Piero de' Medici. Already committed to the Aragonese cause when Charles entered Italy, Piero had paid no heed to the first successes of the French by sea and land, and, in spite both of those danger signals and of the growing fear and anger of his people, had advanced further along the path which he had chosen, and

[1] E. Armstrong, *Lorenzo de' Medici and Florence in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 80–1.

upon which he perhaps felt that he had already travelled beyond the possibility of retrogression. In a secret pact with Alfonso and the Pope he had undertaken to offer resistance to the French advance; he had permitted the Neapolitan fleet to base itself upon his harbour of Leghorn, and Neapolitan recruiting agents to engage soldiers throughout his territories; he had allowed Annibale Bentivoglio to join Ferrantino in Romagna at the head of two companies; and he had furnished contingents of his own infantry and artillery for service under the Neapolitan standards. But this adventurous and courageous attitude did not survive the near approach of the hostile armies, marked as it was by the bloody little affair at Fivizzano and by the indiscriminate looting of Montpensier's forces in Lunigiana; and at the proximity of danger Piero passed at a bound from a pinnacle of presumption to an abyss of fright and despair. Conscious of his own incapacity for war, aware of his unpopularity, frightened by the strength and fury of the French, the military unreadiness of Florence, the hatred of Pisa, the hostility of Lucca and Siena, of a sudden he found himself bereft of the support in which he had placed his hope and trust. Events drove home the bitter conclusion that his allies were broken reeds. It was in vain that he looked for help from Romagna, where the forces of Alfonso were occupied too fully to spare detachments for another theatre of war; neither could he expect aid from Rome, where Alexander VI had lost Ostia to the Colonnas and beheld Nettuno occupied by the French fleet. In his anxiety he turned his thoughts to a famous incident in the career of his illustrious father, seeking in it an inspiration for his own conduct in this moment of danger. In the crisis of his own and his city's fate Lorenzo de' Medici had placed himself in the power of his enemy, Ferrante, and had returned in triumph from Naples, bringing peace with honour. But the precedent was a dangerous one to follow, for the success then achieved had resulted from the unique contact of a bold dexterity with a cautious prudence. Piero overrated his own powers, and misjudged the temper of the French. He forgot that similar experiments had been tried by others, and with them had miserably failed. He did not remember that Charles VIII had a father

every whit as dexterous as Lorenzo, in the story of whose career there was yet a melancholy page which recorded the humiliation of Péronne.

On the news of the French approach the Signory of Florence decided to send an embassy to the King: eight of the chief citizens were selected to serve upon it, and amongst them was Piero. This made it the easier for him to carry out his secret resolve, in which he was confirmed by the news that the reinforcements sent to Sarzana had been intercepted and cut to pieces by the French. Giving the slip to his colleagues, he went on alone by way of Pisa to Pietrasanta, and thence sent to the enemy camp to request a safe-conduct. On the morrow, 30th October, Briçonnet and the Sieur de Piennes came to meet him, and introduced him into the presence of the King, whose main army was then nearing Sarzana. Here his courage failed him, and he persuaded himself that he must place all his hope in the generosity of Charles, who might be induced by an unconditional surrender to forgive him for his enmity and to permit the continuance of his power in Florence. Setting at naught the undertaking given before his departure, by which he had bound himself to make no bargain detrimental to Florentine interests, he accepted without demur the harsh conditions which the French put forward: he was required to surrender Sarzana, Sarzanella, Pietrasanta, Librafatta, Pisa, and Leghorn for the duration of the war, to recall his troops from Romagna, to lend the King the sum of 200,000 ducats, and to be taken into the King's protection. Ready as they were to agree to conditions much less onerous, the King's advisers were not a little surprised at the dramatic submission which delivered Florence into their hands, and threw open before them the road to Rome.

The bargain struck, its author went back to Florence, to excuse to his fellow citizens as best he might his cowardice and treachery. The temper of the city boded him no good. Florence had never approved of the policy that had alienated the sympathies of the great nation to which she was united by ancient political ties and by important commercial interests, and as the disastrous consequences of that policy unfolded themselves, the opposition to Piero spread and

hardened. Men who agreed in nothing else concurred in condemning the ineptitude of the Government, and in presence of the culminating infamy of the surrender to the French they became filled with a common purpose. It was no enemy of the Medicean party, but Piero Capponi, one of its leading supporters, who declared in Council that the time had come to throw off the rule of youths. On the 9th November, when Piero de' Medici, just back in Florence, attempted to enter the palace where the Signory was sitting, he was refused admission. He went back into the streets, to rally to his support the populace which for so long had been the mainstay of the Medicean power; but wherever he showed himself he was received with threats and maledictions. Without awaiting the arrival of the troops which were marching to his support under one of his Orsini relatives, he fled in terror from the city. Thereupon the Signory proclaimed him a rebel against the Republic, put a price upon his head, and set to work to expunge all traces of his rule.

The day which saw the fall of the Medicis in Florence beheld also another revolution in which that city was vitally concerned. As soon as the submission of Piero had removed the obstacles in his way, Charles had continued his advance. Reaching Lucca during the first week of November, he made a brief stay in that city, and on the 8th went on to Pisa. There his coming was hailed with delight for the hope it offered of putting an end to the subjection in which for close upon a century the once proud and free Republic had stood enslaved to a hated rival. Pisa had succumbed to the Florentines after a famous siege in 1406. With their ancient foe prostrate before them the victors had set themselves to ensure that this formidable commercial competitor should never again be in a position to challenge the supremacy of Florence. The conquered city was held in a grinding bondage; its people were excluded from all offices, were injured and insulted, were crushed by onerous taxation, and were exposed to every variety of private extortion. The public spirit which survived these indignities the Florentines called Pisan pride, and the edict went forth that it should be crushed. With this end in view the conquerors began of deliberate

purpose to contrive the utter ruin of the agriculture and commerce which had formed the twin foundations of the city's greatness. By Pisan skill and Pisan industry the delta of the Arno, devoid of natural drainage and liable to inundation, had been reclaimed and made fertile and salubrious. The dikes and ditches by which this work had been accomplished were now neglected, and soon ceased to perform their beneficent functions; stagnant waters submerged the once fertile plain; noxious vapours were exhaled by the once healthy land; the deadly fevers of the Maremma began to claim their victims in the dwellings of Pisa; and damp and decay began the slow but sure destruction of the rich and beautiful buildings in which a happier age had reared noble monuments of Italian taste and skill. With the same vindictive cruelty the city's jealous masters devised the annihilation of the commerce which had successfully competed with their own. Pisa had once ranked with Venice and Genoa as one of the chief centres of Italian maritime activity; her flag had been seen in all the harbours of the Mediterranean; and it was largely by her enterprise that the lucrative commerce with the East had been initiated and developed. It was now decreed that no citizen of the conquered city should any longer carry on the manufacture of silk and wool, and that none but Florentines should be permitted to engage in wholesale trade. By these means a malignant and implacable enmity achieved its object of bringing Pisa to ruin: grass began to grow in her deserted streets; her ships rotted in idleness beside the empty quays; a mournful silence pervaded the once busy centres of her commercial and industrial activity; and helpless, impoverished, depopulated, the city which had held so proud a place among the rich and free Republics of Italy lay prostrate and palsied, the phantom of her former self. In the material sphere the purpose of Florence was achieved with terrible completeness, but in the moral she encountered a spirit which calamity could not break nor the most cruel oppression subdue. Pride in a departed greatness and the memory of an ancient freedom lived on in Pisan breasts; to behold that greatness restored, that freedom reborn, was the secret aspiration of every Pisan mind; and to that end all ranks and classes in Pisa

were ready to expend life and strength and all they had, thinking nothing worth the having upon the terms of an enduring bondage to their hated foe.[1]

As the French approached, the Archbishop and all his clergy, the chief citizens, and a great concourse of townspeople went out to welcome them. The keys of the town were presented to the King, who then entered in state under a gorgeous baldacchino, and took up his quarters in the Palazzo Medici, which had been prepared for his reception by the previous orders of Piero. On the following morning Charles visited the Cathedral, and in the afternoon made a tour of the city, inspecting its fortifications. He was everywhere followed by throngs of people imploring him to take pity upon the misfortunes of Pisa. When he got back at dusk, a deputation of the chief citizens was waiting to be received in audience. At its head was Simone Orlandi, who was notorious for his hatred of the Florentines, and whose house had long been the centre where Pisan patriots had congregated to plan revenge and dream of freedom. Speaking in French, which he knew well, Orlandi begged the King to free Pisa from the yoke beneath which she groaned. He painted in lively colours the former greatness of the city, and then with the vehement eloquence of outraged patriotism described the misery to which she had been reduced and the cruel oppression to which she had been subjected. Charles had professed that one of his objects in coming to Italy was to free her from her tyrants; nowhere could he find a better opportunity than in Pisa to redeem his promises; and if he were to lose that opportunity, if he were to ignore this righteous appeal, if he were to leave the city in bondage to its tyrannical oppressors, Italy could place no faith in his promises, nor retain any belief in the purity of his motives.

Charles was in a difficult position. It was clear that freedom for Pisa was something which was not his to give, and that in giving it he must irrevocably alienate a power whose goodwill was of vital consequence to his plans. On the other hand, the whole of his entourage were eager

[1] Corio, *Istoria di Milano*, ed. de Magri, vol. iii, notes; and Fanucci, 'Le Relazioni tra Pisa e Carlo VIII' in *Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, vol. xvi (1894).

sympathisers with the Pisan cause; they had listened in their billets in the town to pathetic tales of Pisan suffering; they had been stung to indignation by Orlandi's fiery eloquence; and the good nature which hates to cross a friend was reinforced in Charles by the generous spirit which burns at a tale of wrong. He replied to Orlandi that he desired justice and would welcome the restoration of Pisan freedom.

Amongst the excited populace which was awaiting the upshot of its spokesman's mission, this ambiguous reply was hailed with transports of delight. The streets at once resounded with cries of 'France and liberty'. The flames of many bonfires leapt up into the darkness of the night. On the Ponte Vecchio stood the *marzocco*, the sculptured lion which was the symbol of Florentine dominion; this hated emblem was torn from its pedestal, dragged with derision through the streets, and at length thrown contumeliously into the river. All other evidences of Florentine rule were attacked and smashed to pieces. The captain of the Florentine garrison was chased through the streets; the guard-houses were raided; and Florentine tax-gatherers and Florentine officials fled for their lives.

On the 11th November, when Charles had left Pisa, the citizens in general assembly swore fealty to the Crown of France. A banner emblazoned with the Royal arms was hoisted on the column upon which the Florentine *marzocco* had formerly stood, and everywhere the insignia of France were substituted for those of Florence. On the following day three ambassadors were appointed to follow Charles, who had gone towards Florence; they were to tell him that Pisa would support him with six or eight thousand men, if he should desire help against Florence, and to ask what his wishes might be touching the government of their city. The King received these envoys graciously, thanked them for their offer, and said that he would settle their affairs as soon as he had reached Florence.

Tidings of these events preceded Charles as he advanced, and did nothing to allay the agitation which had been produced in Florence by the expulsion of the Medici and the coming of the French. An army as powerful as had been seen for generations in Italy was moving on the city,

and it was difficult to tell whether it came as a friend or as a foe. The encouragement given to the Pisan rebellion seemed to be of evil augury, and if the attitude of the French were to be hostile, it would not be strange. Little as Florence had liked his policy, Piero de' Medici had yet been the official representative of the Republic, when he had sided with Naples; and when she expelled him, he had been taken into the protection of the King of France. Living in the electric atmosphere of revolution, the Florentines were disposed to expect the worst, to credit the French with every sort of malign intention, and to suppose that they came with the fixed design of restoring Piero and possibly of sacking the city. Moved by these fears, they began surreptitiously to prepare for resistance: weapons and stores were collected, soldiers were enrolled in the surrounding districts, and armed men were secreted in the houses.

Whilst the Florentines were apprehensive, the French were suspicious. Charles stopped his advance at Signa, seven miles from the city, partly to let the revolutionary excitement subside, and partly to allow of the small force which was with him being strengthened by the arrival of reinforcements. The friends of Piero were doing their utmost to excite his distrust of the Republic. They told him that Piero had been driven from power, not for his hostility to the French, but for his surrender to them, maintained that the revolution had been directed against Charles himself, and argued that a Medicean restoration was essential in the French interest. Charles listened and hesitated, not sure of the Florentine attitude, and doubtful of his own.

On the 17th November he entered Florence in the guise of a conqueror, riding lance in rest at the head of his army, whilst above his head waved banners inscribed with the words, *Missus a Deo*. The Signory had prudently resolved to make the best of that which could not be avoided, and Charles, who was waiting to see what would be the manner of his reception, had no cause to complain of the welcome extended to him. As in the other Italian cities which he had visited, the streets were gay with decorations, rich tapestries hung from the windows, and the lilies of France

figured prominently on every side. The Signory with a brilliant retinue met him at the gates, and in the crowded streets he was received vociferously with cries of 'Long live France! Welcome to the restorer of our freedom!' That evening the King sat in his quarters in the Medici Palace, with an illuminated city ablaze around him, and wrote to his brother-in-law, the Duke of Bourbon, to recount the events of the afternoon. 'I entered Florence to-day', he told him,[1] 'and the Signory gave me a great reception; never, even in a city of my own kingdom, was greater honour done me. I had with me three thousand Swiss, six thousand men-at-arms, four hundred arblasters, the two hundred gentlemen of my Household, the pensioners, and the rest of my suite. It was a goodly company, and it is long since a solemn entry took place so splendid as this.'

It was well for Florence that Charles had been favourably impressed, for the adherents of Piero had not relaxed their efforts, and Medicean intrigue was still busy around him. With little affection for Piero, whose hostility he found it hard to forgive, the King was yet disposed to believe that the exiled ruler was less black than he was painted, and was more than half inclined to think that by his surrender at Sarzana he had established a title to French protection, if not a claim to be restored to power. With a just appreciation of the motives by which the King's conduct was wont to be determined, the adherents of the Medici appealed to Charles' generosity and love of justice. They did not ask that Piero should be restored. They requested merely that the accusations against him should be examined, and that he should be permitted to come and plead his cause before the King; he would submit in all things to the King's arbitration, confident that, if his innocence should be established, Charles would find some means of reconciling him with his fellow citizens. Charles listened with favour to these representations, and a message was sent to the exile, telling him to come back at once and put himself under the King's protection.[2]

The return of Piero was a thing which the Signory was

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, pp. 111–12.
[2] Delaborde, *L'Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*, pp. 464–5.

determined at all costs to prevent, but the tactics of his partisans had placed them upon the horns of a dilemma. The proposal that he should be heard in his own defence being not unreasonable, they could not object to it without prejudicing their cause in the mind of the King; but the temper of the city being what it was, they could not agree to it without running the risk of a disturbance which the presence of large bodies of foreign troops might turn into a disaster. The reality of this danger was shown by an incident which occurred at the very time when the Signory had the matter under consideration. Two French soldiers, prompted in all probability by no motive more serious than idle curiosity, tried to enter the palace in which the Signory were sitting, and were denied admission. News of the incident got about, and malicious minds represented it as a deliberate attempt to provoke the discord which the general anxiety was but too prone to anticipate. The whole city was thrown into a state of commotion; crowds began to collect in the public squares; and honest burghers, who lived in daily dread of plunder at the hands of a barbarian soldiery, set hurriedly to work to shut their shops and secrete their valuables. An excitement for which they could see no cause, and precautions which seemed wholly unintelligible, operated in turn upon the minds of the French; something, they thought, must be on foot, some movement directed against themselves; and they hastened to draw up some of their troops outside the Royal quarters, whilst detailing others to guard the bridges and occupy other points of vantage. If these things could result spontaneously from the prevailing excitement and mistrust, it was clear that there was nothing alarmist in the Signory's prediction that the coming of Piero would result in serious trouble. Charles himself was alive to the danger, and was not so partial to Piero as to relish the prospect of disturbance on his account, or to be ready to incur in his interest the grave peril of an unequal battle in the narrow streets of a populous city. His desire, he said, was, not to make further changes, but to still discords, to remove the cause of troubles, and to establish concord among fellow citizens. He had thought it fair that Piero should be heard in his own defence, but he would not insist upon it, and if

the Florentines were determined not to have him back, the question might be dropped.[1]

With the removal of this obstacle to agreement the negotiations for an alliance between the King and the Republic proceeded more smoothly. Two difficulties, the one of a financial nature and the other of a political, still required adjustment, the King demanding a loan of 150,000 ducats, which the Florentines thought excessive, and requiring that his representatives should be present at the deliberations of the Signory, which they regarded as an outrage upon their independence. Guicciardini and other writers tell a dramatic story of the progress of the negotiations. The King, they say, put forward his terms. The Florentine commissioners objected to them. Charles ignored the remonstrance, and reiterated his demands. Again the commissioners refused to give way. Feeling was running high when matters were settled by the courage of one of the Florentine plenipotentiaries, Piero Capponi. When Charles in angry tones threatened to blow his trumpets, Capponi seized the paper on which the French terms were written out, and, tearing it in half under the King's eyes, burst out upon him: 'Blow your trumpets, if these be your demands, and we will ring our bells.' Capponi had been an ambassador in France, and Charles knew his courage and resolution. He saw that there was a point beyond which Florentine patience must not be tried, and recalling Capponi with a jest, he consented to the modification of his demands.

By the 25th November the treaty[2] was ready for signature. Florence recognized Charles as the protector of her liberties. Pisa and Leghorn were to remain in French hands during the expedition to Naples, this being for the convenience and safety of the Royal army and not to the detriment of the Republic, which was to retain its rights of jurisdiction and administration in the two towns and to receive them back upon the conclusion of the enterprise. Florence undertook to pardon Pisa for her rebellion, and to treat

[1] Delaborde, *op. cit.*, p. 467.

[2] The Latin text is printed in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. i, pp. 362–75. A summary in French will be found in Canestrini et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane*, vol. i, pp. 601–6.

her in future with greater leniency. Sarzana, Sarzanella, and Pietrasanta would remain in the King's hands provisionally: in the matter of the Genoese claim to these places Charles would endeavour to arrange an accommodation, and in the event of failure he would restore the places to Florence without prejudice to existing rights. The King was to appoint an officer who should be responsible for the maintenance of order in the occupied towns and for the prevention of disputes between their inhabitants and the French garrisons. All other places in French occupation would be restored forthwith. Two representatives of the King were to remain in Florence during the expedition; the Signory would consult with them as required; no decision touching the King's affairs would be taken except in their presence; and no Captain-General of the Florentine armies was to be appointed without the King's approval. Throughout the territories of the Republic the French were to have free passage for their troops and the right to purchase provisions at a just price. Having promised Florence his favour and protection, the King would use his utmost endeavours to promote peace between her and her neighbours, especially Genoa; the friends and enemies of each contracting party should be the friends and enemies of the other; and in evidence of their peculiar relations the Republic might display the lilies of France in its civic escutcheon. Florentines should have the right to travel freely in all countries of the King's obedience, and to own property, make wills, and hold ecclesiastical benefices within them upon a footing of equality with subjects of the French Crown. To aid the Neapolitan enterprise, Florence undertook 'of her own free will' to find the sum of 120,000 ducats, which was to be payable as to 50,000 ducats in a fortnight, as to a further 40,000 in March 1495, and as to the balance in the following June. By the special request of the King the Signory agreed to rescind the decrees which declared Piero de' Medici to be a traitor and put a price upon his head; the confiscation of his property was also to be annulled; and his wife and son were to be permitted to return to Florence. These terms were sworn with due solemnity in the Cathedral of Florence, and on the 28th November the King of France left for Siena.

While these events had been in progress on the banks of the Arno, it had become apparent that the collapse of Piero de' Medici had dealt a final blow to his Neapolitan friends, who had been contending with an adverse fortune on the other side of the mountains. I have already referred to the partial failure of Ferrantino's plan of campaign in Romagna, frustrated by the tardiness of his movements, by the difficulties which he had experienced in securing the support of Bologna, Imola, and Forli, and by the arrival of the Franco-Milanese advance-guard under d'Aubigny and the Count of Caiazzo, closing the approaches to Lombardy. If unable to enter Ludovic's dominions, the Duke of Calabria was ordered by Alfonso to run as little risk as possible in the handling of an army which was essential to the safety of Naples, his instructions being to await indications of the French line of advance, and then by blocking the coast road to Rimini or by moving across the hills into Tuscany to hold up the enemy until the coming of winter should put an end to their operations. With his attention diverted to these objects, Ferrantino had displayed little enterprise; nor were his opponents more eager than he that the pace should be forced, for they found themselves in a numerical inferiority, and their primary business was to avoid all risks until the French had entered Italy in sufficient numbers to make Milan secure. The campaign had thus opened with marches, countermarches, and manœuvring for position, conducted on both sides with a fixed resolve to avoid a decisive engagement. By these dilatory tactics Ferrantino lost such chance as his initial misfortunes had left him of striking a vigorous blow while there was yet an opportunity. Time and fortune both declared for France. Every day French troops were entering Italy and finding their way to d'Aubigny's camp, and as soon as the Royal army reached Asti, two hundred lances and a thousand Swiss were sent on into Romagna. Whilst the numbers of its enemies thus increased, the size of the Neapolitan army not only failed to grow, but began actually to diminish for lack of the reinforcements required to make good the wastage in the ranks. This arose from the action of the Colonnas, who had sided with the French, and who in September opened hostilities in the neighbour-

hood of Rome, seized Ostia, and cut off the Papal capital from sea-borne supplies. 'The King of Naples does not see how he can send reinforcements to the Duke of Calabria', wrote the Florentine ambassador from Naples on 4th October,[1] 'because the Pope is so very anxious to operate against the Colonnas, and threatens to come to terms with Cardinal Ascanio, if he does not receive adequate support.' Meanwhile, the confidence of d'Aubigny was growing with his numbers, and in October, while the Aragonese lay in inglorious ease in their position at Faenza, he slipped away to the county of Imola, and began a series of attacks upon the strong places of Caterina Sforza. Having assaulted Bubano to no purpose, he sat down and besieged Mordano. Caterina appealed to the Duke of Calabria to come and relieve her fortress; her appeal was ignored; and in a few days Mordano, after a heroic resistance, was captured by storm, plundered, and burnt, and its garrison put to the sword. Furious at Ferrantino's apathy in her behalf, Caterina determined to abandon an ally who cared so little for her interests, and on the 25th October announced in Imola that she had made an alliance with the French. A week later Piero de' Medici surrendered at Sarzana, and the Florentine forces were recalled from Romagna. Thereupon Ferrantino withdrew to Cesena, and thence fell back upon Rome, while at the same time the Neapolitan fleet retired from Leghorn, leaving the way clear for French vessels to appear at Ostia and establish contact with the insurgent Colonnas. Having nothing further to do in Romagna, d'Aubigny thus became free to rejoin the main French army in Florence about the time when Charles was preparing to take his departure from that city.

With Piero de' Medici and Ferrantino of Calabria thus disposed of, the next obstacle in the way of the French was Pope Alexander VI. With an eye on His Holiness Charles issued from Florence a manifesto in which he set forth the objects of his expedition, the idea being to justify in advance any pressure which it might become necessary to apply in subsequent relations with the Vatican. His intention, said the King in this document, was to free the Holy Places and to relieve Christendom from the menace of the infidel;

[1] Canestrini et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques*, vol. i, p. 453.

and in pursuit of this holy purpose he required to occupy the Kingdom of Naples, which of right belonged to him. The precautionary pronouncement did not mean that Charles intended to fall foul of Alexander: on the contrary, he eagerly desired his neutrality, and still hoped to win from him the investiture of Naples. 'I am informed that the Pope is taking the field against the Colonnas, who are in my pay and service . . .', he had lately written to the Cardinal of Saint-Denis in Rome.[1] 'Represent to him that in attacking them he will perform an act of hostility against me and my army, which would be too great a declaration in favour of Don Alfonso; and suggest to him that he ought at the least to remain neutral. . . . You will also tell him that I have been informed of his intention to send hither as Legate the Cardinal of Siena, who is an out-and-out Aragonese, and has always been a partisan of the said Alfonso. Him, therefore, I cannot receive with favour or confidence. But if His Holiness will send me some other Legate not suspect of partisanship, he shall be received with due honour.'

The Cardinal of Siena, Francesco Piccolomini, had received his commission before the King's protest reached Rome, and at Lucca Charles had found him waiting with urgent instructions to get the French advance arrested. For a while the King refused to see him, and when at length he consented to do so, it was only to tell him in cold and blunt terms that his plans were a matter which he meant to discuss with the Pope in Rome. At Siena Charles was again brought into contact with the Cardinal, this place being Piccolomini's archiepiscopal see. As the ecclesiastical chief of a city which Charles desired to conciliate, Piccolomini met with a more courteous reception than that previously accorded to him when acting as the representative of King Alfonso's ally. Indeed, at Siena Charles was in a wholly gracious mood. He made no difficulty about receiving the Cardinal of San Severino, who brought another message from the Pope; and he refused to enforce the terms which his ministers sought to impose upon the little Republic. They had demanded from Siena a loan of 30,000 ducats and the surrender of certain ports. Upon the

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, pp. 97–8.

remonstrance of the Sienese these demands were waived by the King. 'Your town belongs to the Virgin', he replied to them ;[1] 'therefore I will leave it intact. I insist neither upon your money nor upon your harbours, for I know you to be good Frenchmen, and you will find me a good citizen of Siena.'

Meanwhile the advance-guard under Montpensier had been continuing the advance, and had progressed with a rapidity which filled Italy with astonishment and its enemies with consternation. It seemed as though Heaven itself had resolved to smile upon a progress which man did not dare to oppose. As a rule, the change from summer to winter in Italy is marked by a rainy season, of which the effect in those days was to render the roads impassable and to turn many areas of the country's surface into pestilential swamps. But, as it happened, the autumn of 1494 was abnormal ; mild and dry conditions prevailed for week after week ; and the invaders marched pleasantly forward under cloudless skies in a gentle warmth which recalled the summer weather of their own northern clime.[2] In these conditions the advance progressed with a rapidity which upset all calculations. Viterbo, which the Duke of Calabria had meant to occupy, opened its gates to Montpensier before the Neapolitans could reach it. Near by, in the neighbourhood of Acquapendente, a large party had assembled for a wedding in the Farnese family, and, never dreaming of the proximity of the French, the lovely Giulia, the Pope's mistress, decided to join it. On the road she fell in with a party of French skirmishers, and was taken prisoner, to the dismay of His Holiness and the no small joy of a naughty world. Alexander was beside himself with anxiety, but he need not have worried, for Giulia's captors knew how to behave with propriety in such a conjuncture. Giulia was not only allowed to proceed upon her way, but was actually provided with an escort of picked

[1] Delaborde, *Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*, p. 490.

[2] See Corio, *Istoria di Milano*, vol. iii, p. 577 ; Giovio, *Istorie del suo Tempo*, trans. L. Domenichi, vol. i, p. 66 ; Benedetti, *Il Fatto d'Arme del Taro*, p. 30 ; *Diarium Ferrariense* in Muratori, vol. xxiv, cols. 289, 295 ; Matarazzo, 'Cronaca della Città di Perugia' in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. xvi, part ii, p. 24.

troops, instructed to see that no further mishap should befall their fair and frail charge.

The King himself, who wished to spend Christmas in Rome, followed hard on the heels of Montpensier. On the 4th December he left Siena, which he had reached two days before, entered Viterbo on the 10th, and on the 15th went on again to Nepi. Before him lay the country of Virginio Orsini, and Orsini was the Grand Constable of Naples, the ally of the Pope, and the sworn foe of Charles' adherents, the Colonnas. Here, then, if anywhere, in the strongholds of his warlike clan, might resistance be expected; here might a loyal and courageous effort avail to impede, or even to arrest, the progress of the enemy. But loyalty and courage were qualities which seemed to wither away before the advent of the French. As Montpensier's men spread out over the country, the lesser Orsini fortresses succumbed without a show of resistance, and on the 19th December the great stronghold of Bracciano, the centre and pivot of the Orsini power, submissively threw open its gates to admit the King.

Though the enemy were within sight, the Pope's plans were still undetermined. Anxiety and distress were abroad in the Eternal City. With Ostia in the hands of the Colonnas, the Tiber closed to sea-borne supplies, and hostile bands marauding almost up to its walls, Rome was virtually besieged, and weeks ago had begun to feel the pinch of hunger. The Pope had shifted from one policy to another with an irresolution which was excused by the fact that circumstances did not allow of any satisfactory course of action. He had received the French King's ambassadors, yet declined to listen to their proposals. Whilst negotiating with them, he had denounced their master to the Venetians and to the King of the Romans. He had made simultaneous preparations for resistance and for flight, rebuilding the walls of Rome, laying in stores, and preparing the Castle of Sant' Angelo to withstand a siege at the same time that he got together his valuables, packed his trunks, and saddled his horses. Strangest of all, perhaps, and least judicious, was his conduct to Ascanio Sforza, whom he had recalled under a safe-conduct, and then placed under arrest. Alexander's motive in summoning Ascanio was to secure

the mediatorial services of Ludovic, whose displeasure in the unexpectedly rapid successes of the French arms was no secret in the Vatican, and whose influence might possibly avail to save Rome from a French occupation. Ascanio expressed his willingness to intervene, but coupled his offer with conditions which the Pope did not choose to accept, more especially as the situation had altered to his advantage since he had first approached Ascanio, for in the meantime Ferrantino's army from Romagna had reached the neighbourhood of Rome, and the Spanish sovereigns had begun to counsel resistance. Encouraged by this support, Alexander dismissed the French ambassadors who had just reached Rome, refused their request for a free passage through the Papal States, and ordered the arrest of Ascanio Sforza, Prospero Colonna, and four or five prelates of his entourage who had become obnoxious by reason of their Francophil leanings. He hoped, probably, by this vigorous action to give a signal which would raise the country against the invader; but, if so, he was doomed to disappointment, and the chief result of his *coup* was to effect a temporary *rapprochement* between Ludovic and his French ally, both of whom were aggrieved and exasperated by his ill-timed vigour.

The fit of courage—more justly, perhaps, it might be termed audacity—which had been bred in the Supreme Pontiff by the presence of Ferrantino's army did not long survive the buffeting of an adverse fortune. It was one thing to imprison recalcitrant clerics, and quite another to arrest the progress of an invincible invader. The wildest optimist could scarcely suppose that it was possible to resist Charles by force, and the question of the best line of action for the Pope to pursue still awaited an answer. Alfonso would have had him retire to Naples, and was ready with treaties for guaranteeing his welfare in that event. But Alexander could not bring himself to leave Rome. Though to remain might involve unpleasantness and perhaps humiliation, yet to flee might precipitate disaster. If he were to forsake his capital, would he ever return as the wearer of the triple crown? The King of France in moments of irritation had hinted, not obscurely, at the need for a reformation of the Church, and Alexander's simoniacal

election had bequeathed to him a legacy of haunting fears. Charles, perhaps, was scarcely the man to convene a General Council and undertake the deposition of the spiritual head of Christendom; but Alexander's deadliest enemy was at Charles' side, and the driving power and moral authority which the easy-going monarch lacked could be supplied by the iron will of the remorseless Cardinal della Rovere. It was safer to stay and face the worst than to invite deposition by running away. And it was clear that, if he were to stay, he must show some complaisance to the French. Ascanio and his fellow prisoners were therefore released; Ferrantino was invited to retire with his army upon the Regno; and arrangements were begun for receiving Charles in Rome.

On the last day of the old year, in the failing light of the short winter afternoon, the King of France entered the Eternal City at the head of his troops. With him was his army in almost full strength; there were lacking only the small detachments which had been left behind to garrison Pisa and Siena and a little corps which had been detached under Marshal de Rieux to subjugate the Abruzzi. It was long since the capital of Christendom had beheld so impressive a display. For hour after hour the long procession passed by on its way through the Porta del Popolo and down the Via Lata to the Palace of St. Mark, where the King was to lodge: here were the regiments of mighty Swiss, the nimble and swarthy sons of Gascony, the bodyguard of faithful Scots, the gorgeous companies of resplendent men-at-arms, the deadly cannon, which were the terror of Italy and the wonder of the world; and over all this warlike pomp the flickering torches threw their weird and distorting light. Eight Cardinals had gone out to meet the French, and rode at the King's side as he entered Rome. The Pope himself with his Court had withdrawn within the Vatican, whence, if need be, he could retreat by the covered passage which led to the Castle of Sant' Angelo.

Now that the French were in Rome, there were many matters to be settled with the Pope. It was open to Charles to dictate his terms, and, if necessary, to impose them upon Alexander, but, though master of the situation, he was restrained from violence by an old-fashioned reverence for

the Papacy, to which there appeared to be something shocking in the notion of enforcing submission upon the Supreme Pontiff at the point of the sword. Besides, he was still optimistic enough to suppose that his terms were such as the Pope could accept without difficulty. He wanted, in the first place, a right of free passage through the Papal States, together with permission to purchase supplies at fair prices and some guarantee for the security of his lines of communication. Next, he desired a specific acknowledgement of his title to the throne of Naples. And, thirdly, he required the possession of the person of Prince Djem, the Turkish pretender, who was in Papal custody, and whose presence would be of enormous value in the contemplated crusade.

The younger son of Mohammed II, Djem had been defeated in a war of succession, and had fled for protection to the Knights of St. John in Rhodes; he had then been sent to France for greater security; and after spending seven years in confinement in that country, he had been handed over to Pope Innocent VIII. 'Now is it in the power of Christendom to destroy the detestable race of Mahomet', the Grand Master had written,[1] when Djem reached Rhodes. 'Djem's faction will revive, if he be furnished with troops, and his brother, who is a coward, will be frightened out of his wits. He has few good generals in his service, and the best of all, Achmed-Pasha, the victor of Otranto, is only waiting for a propitious moment to turn against him; of this he has assured Prince Djem in writing, begging him not to despair of fortune. . . . Christian powers need make no great sacrifices, for we shall be helped in Europe by the Prince's partisans, and in Asia by the King of Karamania, who is eager to recover his lost possessions. Sultan Bajazet, surrounded by enemies, will be unable to offer resistance.' The question of Djem's custody had aroused the liveliest interest among half the powers of Europe, and from the time of his transfer to the Pope's care Bajazet had sent 40,000 ducats a year to Rome, ostensibly as an allowance to his brother, but really to ensure that he should not be used for any hostile purpose. Only a few weeks before Charles reached Rome, a Papal Nuncio

[1] Thuasne, *Djem-Sultan*, p. 68.

on his way back from Constantinople had fallen into the hands of Giovanni della Rovere, the Cardinal's brother; on him were found the 40,000 ducats, paid in advance upon the Pope's request, together with correspondence which left no doubt that very amicable relations existed between the Vicar of Christ and the infidel monarch. It was not likely that the Pope would agree to give up his valuable prize, so long as he should see any possible chance of retaining him. His actions showed what was in his mind. Upon the approach of the French he entrusted the care of Djem to two of his own nephews, and had him removed from his apartments in the Vatican to the greater security of the fortified Castle of Sant' Angelo.

After a fortnight of negotiation, during the whole of which anxious time the Pope exhibited a commendable courage and firmness of purpose, the terms of an accord were at length agreed upon (15th January). The French army was to have a right of passage through the Papal States; one or two of the towns which they had already occupied, such as Viterbo and Cività Vecchia, were to be left in French hands; and all other Papal places were to be put under governors nominated or approved by the King. The Cardinals, lords, and cities which had espoused the French cause were to be granted a free pardon, with full resumption of their privileges and preferments, and it was expressly provided that Cardinal della Rovere should regain Ostia and retain all his benefices. Cesare Borgia would accompany the King as Papal Legate during a period of four months. Prince Djem would be handed over upon the terms that he should be restored to Papal custody at the termination of the enterprise, and that in the meantime the pension of 40,000 ducats paid by the Sultan in respect of him should be credited to the Pope. Charles, on his side, waived his demand for the surrender of the Castle of Sant' Angelo, agreed to restore the keys of Rome when he should leave the city, and undertook to make the act of filial obedience which so far he had refused. Nothing was said about the investiture of Naples, but it was understood that this point was covered by the Pope's previous promise to let Charles be crowned, provided that the coronation were not invoked as an adjudication upon the title to the throne.

That the conflict between the Pope and the King should thus end in an amicable compromise was a keen disappointment to the Cardinals of the opposition, who had counted upon pushing the quarrel to a point where Charles would be compelled to summon a General Council and propose the election of a new pontiff. More recent critics of the King and his advisers have likewise assailed the treaty as an unpardonable surrender to a beaten enemy. But upon a dispassionate survey of all the circumstances it will most probably be concluded that each of the parties to the quarrel had extricated himself without loss of honour from an embarrassing position. The Pope had contrived to elude the awkward question of the Neapolitan title, whilst securing from the foremost monarchy in Europe a formal recognition of his own position. Charles, on the other hand, had gained most of the advantages which he had come to Rome to seek: he had detached Alexander from Alfonso, at all events to outward appearances; he had made his lines of communication secure; and he had obtained possession of the Turkish pretender. It was very doubtful whether public opinion among his own subjects would have allowed him to use the force by which alone he could have exacted more favourable terms. The public opinion of Europe would certainly not have tolerated an attempt to depose Alexander through the instrumentality of the Cardinals of the opposition. 'I cannot say whether the King did well or ill; however, my belief is that he acted for the best in coming to terms, for he was young, and his surroundings were not of a nature to fit him for so great a work as the reform of the Church. . . . All men of experience and judgement would, I think, have held it to be a good, great, and most holy task, but it would have been a very delicate affair.' Such was the opinion of Commynes,[1] in which the learned historian of the Papacy concurs. 'Alexander VI might be unfit to be Pope,' is the conclusion of Bishop Creighton,[2] 'but Charles VIII was equally unfit to say so.' Briçonnet told the Queen that no one could ever have supposed that things would have gone

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 188.

[2] Creighton, *A History of the Papacy during the Period of the Reformation*, vol. iii, p. 201.

so satisfactorily, and that as speedily. 'And, to be brief,' he added, 'I believe firmly that it is the work, not of men, but of God; for every one, so far as I know, has wanted the King to go back home again, and has laboured rather to break off than to forward our undertaking. . . . The Pope owes more to the King than is known, for if my lord had listened to the majority of the Cardinals, they would have made another Pope with the alleged intention of reforming the Church. The King is favourable to a reformation, but, despite the Pope's adherence to the enemy and generally hostile attitude, does not wish to undertake his deposition.' [1]

The signature of the treaty was followed by an interview between the Pope and the King, who had not yet met. On 16th January Charles shifted his quarters to the Vatican, and in the gardens there found himself in the presence of Alexander, who had come by the covered passage from the Castle of Sant' Angelo. The Pope professed his pleasure in making Charles' acquaintance, and immediately granted his request that the Bishop of Saint-Malo, Briçonnet, should be made a Cardinal. Three days later, another French prelate, the Bishop of Le Mans, was also invested with the red hat at the King's suggestion, and at the same time Charles made the formal act of obedience for which the treaty stipulated. To outward appearances, the former enemies had become bosom friends: Charles occupied apartments next to those of the Pope, was allowed to retain his Scottish Guard, exchanged frequent visits with His Holiness, and rode with him in public through the streets of Rome. But appearances were deceptive, for the leopard had not changed his spots, and there was a vital matter upon which no agreement was possible. Alexander would confer the Empire of the East upon His Most Christian Majesty; he would use his best endeavours to arrange an accommodation with Alfonso, if Charles would but treat with him; but on the one point for which he cared, Charles could get no satisfaction, and the Pope became adamant upon the mere mention of the investiture of Naples. He was determined that by no act of his should a French conquest of Naples be facilitated, and, indeed,

[1] La Pilorgerie, *Campagne et Bulletins de la Grande Armée commandée par Charles VIII en Italie*, pp. 138, 135.

he had already nailed his colours to the mast. Just before Charles reached Rome, he had gone out of his way to invest Ferrantino in a public Consistory as heir of his father, and by that unusual procedure had advertised to the world his disapproval of Charles' pretensions.

At last it began to dawn upon the King that he was wasting time in Rome, and perhaps running some unnecessary risk by remaining longer. The position of his army was not wholly comfortable. Provisions had long been scarce in the city, and, although Charles had striven to relieve the scarcity, the presence of a large army was bound in the end to augment the distress of the civilian population. The relations between soldiers and townspeople were another cause of anxiety. Charles upon his arrival had issued a stringent decree against the perpetration of crimes of violence by his troops, and the conduct of his own soldiery had been good; but indignant citizens had a different tale to tell about the behaviour of the Swiss, who seemed to them to fear neither God nor devil. Some rioting had already taken place, in the course of which the Jewish quarter had been sacked, several Christian houses plundered, including that of Vanozza dei Catanei, the mother of the Pope's children, and a few lives had been lost. As the result of prompt action by the King, the loot had been restored and some of the looters executed; patrols had also been instituted to keep order in the streets at night; but the situation was pregnant with alarming possibilities, and prudence required that the army should be got once more upon the march.

Charles left Rome on 28th January, and on the following day reached Velletri. Here he was overtaken by two ambassadors of the Spanish sovereigns, who had expected to meet with him in Rome, but had reached the place a few hours after his departure. Following him without delay, they demanded to be received in audience as soon as they came up with him. When admitted to his presence, they delivered their message: they declared that he had broken the treaty of Barcelona by his seizure of Papal places and by his violence towards the Holy See, complained that he had undertaken the Naples enterprise without any justification for his pretensions, required that he should lay down

his arms forthwith, when peace would be negotiated under the mediation of Ferdinand, and demanded the immediate release of Cesare Borgia and a prompt restoration of Ostia to the Pope. If Naples, they added, were to pass to any other than its present owners, it would have to go to their own sovereign, a nephew of the original conqueror. Charles listened with astonishment and indignation to this outrageous communication from the ruler whose consent he had so lately purchased at so extravagant a price. He answered curtly that things had gone so far that he must now see his conquest through; the validity of his claims could be examined afterwards; only that examination must be conducted by the Parlement of Paris, and not by the Pope, whose partiality unfitted him for the task of arbitration.

This was an unexpected and unpleasant episode; and it was not to stand alone. Charles reached Velletri on 29th January. On the morning of the 30th news was brought to him that Cesare Borgia had disappeared. An inquiry being set on foot, the facts were presently elicited. During the night the Cardinal had disguised himself as a groom, got himself lowered from the walls, mounted the waiting horses which friends had provided for him, and galloped back to Rome. After lying hid there for a night, he had then retired to Spoleto, to avoid implicating the Pope. That it was a preconceived plan became evident when it was learnt that his baggage had never reached Velletri, having been detached during the journey and sent back to Rome. Charles instantly sent to Alexander to demand that the truant should be returned to him. The Pope in reply affected entire ignorance of the whole affair. He was very sorry, he said, but he had not the remotest idea where the Cardinal was; he was certainly not in Rome; there was an idea that he might be at Spoleto, and an envoy had been sent there to look for him; but unfortunately he had not been found. He could but beg that Charles would be pleased to accept his excuses and regrets. 'What dirty dogs these Italians are,' exclaimed the justly incensed monarch, 'and the Holy Father is as bad as the worst of them.'

These were annoying incidents, but good news came

in to counteract their effect. At Marino Charles found della Rovere waiting for him with intelligence that Alfonso had abdicated. The action of his last remaining ally, Alexander VI, in making terms with the French had proved too much for the overwrought nerves of the harassed tyrant. Already he had been deserted by Florence and betrayed by the Orsini. By sea and by land his plans had hopelessly miscarried. Even during the time when the invaders lay inactive in Rome the tale of disaster had still gone mounting up: a small French force under Marshal de Rieux had invaded the Abruzzi; Narni, Terni, Monte Rotondo had opened their gates; Aquila and Sulmona had declared for Charles; Albi and Tagliacozzo had succumbed to the Colonnas. Alfonso persuaded himself that the Aragonese power was in dissolution, for the bully, as Commynes put it, is always a poltroon.[1] Conscious of the hatred with which his subjects regarded him, harassed by anxiety, menaced by increasing dangers, the wretched man succumbed to an abject terror which destroyed all the faculties of his mind. He fancied that his father's spirit appeared to him and prophesied disaster to his House; he beheld the ghosts of his murdered barons grouped in silent menace around his bed; he thought that even the trees and rocks and waves pursued him with the dread cry, 'France, France', which was for ever sounding in his ears. His son, Ferrantino, was young, innocent, popular; upon him the burden of the crimes and oppression of the House of Aragon did not press; there was a chance that he might enjoy a happier fortune and avert the impending doom. On 21st January he resigned his sceptre into Ferrantino's hands, and prepared himself for flight.

The new King's hope lay in the army which he had commanded in Romagna, and which now lay encamped at San Germano on the Neapolitan border. This position was one of the keys of the Regno. On one side lay a marshy plain; on the other the way was barred by high and rugged mountains; in front ran the Garigliano and Liris rivers; and all the approaches were commanded by castles or strong places in Aragonese hands. It was expected that

[1] 'Car jamais homme cruel ne fut hardi': Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 184.

an army of fifty squadrons of cavalry and five thousand foot, helped by the advantages of a position of such great natural strength, would be able to offer a prolonged resistance.

Meanwhile the French were approaching, and, as they came, were dealing with the outlying strongholds. On 31st January they captured Montefortino, a place belonging to Jacopo Conti, who had deserted to the Aragonese after promising to serve with the Colonnas and filling his pockets with French pay. To punish him, the town was given over to pillage, and his two sons, taken in the citadel, were held to ransom. At Monte San Giovanni a few days later there was given a yet more startling exhibition of French fury and frightfulness. Naturally strong, amply garrisoned, and well supplied, this place, which belonged to the Marquis of Pescara, was believed to be impregnable, and if any tales of the might of the French guns had reached the ears of its defenders, they had not shaken their faith in the strength of their fortifications, or abated the truculent spirit which that faith had engendered. Two French heralds were sent to the captain to demand that he should open his gates and hand over his supplies of food. His answer was to cut off the ears and noses of the envoys, and to return them thus mutilated to those who had sent them. The authors of this brutal outrage were soon to be taught a lesson which would reverberate throughout southern Italy. Montpensier appeared before the place on 9th February, and on the same morning the King himself rode over from Veroli, to encourage the attackers, and to direct the chastisement of an enemy who had defied him with such unexampled audacity. After a brief but intense bombardment it was judged that the breaches in the walls were practicable, and the signal for the assault was given. At the head of one assaulting column marched Louis de la Trémoille, the victor of Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier, who had shown his usual solicitude for the rank and file by spending the morning in serving drinks to sweating gunners ; he was the first to set foot on the walls. As he did so, a second column, which also carried his colours, effected an entrance at another breach. In less than an hour, and at the cost of very few lives, Monte San Giovanni had passed into the power of the French.

The capture placed at the disposal of the captors a plentiful store of corn and wine, which was made particularly acceptable by the fact that Ferrantino in his retreat had systematically ravaged the country in which they were now operating. Not less agreeable to most of them was the opportunity which their success offered of exacting retribution for the cruelties that had been practised upon the persons of their heralds. Some attempt was made to provide for the safety of the women and children, but with this exception no mercy was shown, and no quarter given; every man taken with arms in his hands was put to the sword or hurled over the ramparts; and a garrison numbering not far short of nine hundred men paid with their lives for the presumption and cruelty of their leaders. The terrible example was calculated to secure a due observance of the usages of civilized warfare on the part of such other Aragonese commanders as might be tempted to follow the lead of the Marquis of Pescara and his lieutenants. 'I fancy', said Charles, somewhat sardonically, in reporting the capture to the Duke of Bourbon,[1] 'that they have paid rather dearly for putting me to the trouble of looking them up.'

If the little affairs at Fivizzano and Mordano had sufficed to excite consternation in northern Italy, it might be supposed that the bloody business at Monte San Giovanni would fill the south with terror. Ponte Corvo, a Papal possession in the neighbourhood, hastened to open its gates. Rocca Secca and Rocca Guglielma, Neapolitan strongholds, surrendered without a blow to the Count of Guise, being abandoned by their garrisons. At San Germano, where the approach of the French was awaited by the army which alone stood between Ferrantino and destruction, the speedy fall and terrible fate of a fortress believed to be impregnable produced an immense moral effect. Wherever before there had been confidence, it was replaced by anxiety; where there had been anxiety, it deepened into dismay. And it was long since confidence had been the dominant note among the troops which Ferrantino had led into Romagna, for their service had been limited to an ineffective campaign followed by an

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, p. 167.

ignominious retreat, and after those demoralizing experiences it was very doubtful if they could be trusted to stand up against an enemy who seemed to be as irresistible in battle as he was inhuman in victory. Though strong, the position of San Germano was not unassailable; and in fact it was in danger of being turned. In hoisting the French flag the town of Sulmona had thrown open to Rieux the road which led through the Abruzzi by way of Castelsangro and Isernia into the valley of the Volturno. It was known at San Germano that Rieux was attempting an advance along this route, and presently came tidings that he had defeated an Aragonese force which sought to arrest his progress. As soon as he should debouch upon the plain, the communications of San Germano would be cut, and an army still endeavouring to maintain its position there would be placed between two fires. This was a trial which disheartened and demoralized troops could not be expected to endure, and when the French council-of-war met to consider plans for an attack upon San Germano, it was greeted with the intelligence that the position had already been occupied by the advance-guard under de Guise, having been abandoned by the enemy. When Charles wrote to the Duke of Bourbon on 14th February, he was therefore able to date his letter from San Germano, which he called 'the first town and city of my kingdom of Naples'.

Pursued by de Guise's troops, who captured stragglers, baggage, and even some of the guns, Ferrantino fell back upon Capua, where he intended to make another attempt at resistance. The place had always been strongly Aragonese in its sympathies, and the protection afforded by the broad and deep waters of the Volturno made of it a military position of considerable value. Before he could organize its defence, however, he was called away by an urgent message from the Queen, telling him that his capital had every appearance of heading for revolution, and that nothing but his own presence would suffice to restore order. No sooner was his back turned than it was seen how in Capua too he could ill be spared. The Capuans placed small reliance in an army which had never once ventured to meet the enemy in battle, and their affection for the

House of Aragon weighed for little in the balance against their dread of the fate which was wont to befall a city captured by assault. As soon as they were freed of the restraint which the presence of the King imposed upon them, their riotious behaviour quickly convinced the Aragonese commanders that resistance was impossible. Two of these commanders, Virginio Orsini and the Count of Pitigliano, retired to Nola with a handful of loyal troops; the third, Trivulzio, returned to the French camp, which he had already visited in an ineffectual attempt at negotiation in Ferrantino's interest, and after announcing that Capua was willing to surrender, placed his own sword at the disposal of Charles VIII.

The French entered Capua on 18th February, and on the 20th Charles was at Aversa. Gaeta had already surrendered, with the exception of the citadel, which still held out for Aragon, and at Nola a French detachment rounded up and captured the troops which had retired from Capua under Orsini and the Count of Pitigliano. Meanwhile in Naples the confusion had been deepening with every hour that passed. Plunged in nerveless and helpless apathy, the Government had ceased to function, and the city was given over to the tyranny of riotous mobs, which paraded the streets to cries of 'France, France'. After looting the quarters occupied by the Jews and the Moorish converts from Spain, the rioters became emboldened by impunity, and turned their attention to higher game; Government buildings and the houses of Aragonese nobles were attacked and plundered; and the Royal stables, which contained some of the most magnificent horses in Europe, were with difficulty saved by the personal intervention of Ferrantino at the head of his foreign mercenaries. A herald sent by Charles to demand the surrender of the city was greeted with frantic delight (20th February), and on the following morning a deputation of citizens rode out to Poggio Reale to lay their submission at the feet of the King of France. Having made their obeisance with signs of humility which an Oriental potentate might have thought excessive, they begged him to postpone his entry until arrangements could be made for receiving him with becoming splendour; but Charles was impatient to take possession of his conquest,

and on the afternoon of 22nd February, at the head of a small escort, he rode in without ceremony through the Capuan Gate. An observer had declared that the people of Naples were awaiting him as the Jews their Messiah. That this was no hyperbole the enthusiasm with which he was welcomed went far to prove, an enthusiasm of which the spontaneous vehemence was made the more remarkable by the unofficial character of the occasion. The gloomy forebodings of the hapless Alfonso were justified by the event, and in the delirious excitement with which his fickle subjects received their new master it seemed as though the very stones and trees must indeed have conspired with the lungs of men to swell the paeans of applause.

Charles was master of Naples, but not of its defences, and into these, which included several strong castles, Ferrantino's German and Spanish mercenaries had retired upon his approach. Of these castles some, such as Torre San Vincenzo and Pizzofalcone, would present little trouble to the owner of powerful guns; but others were of great strength. The chief were the Castel Nuovo and the Castel dell' Uovo. The Castel Nuovo commanded both the town and the harbour; it was heavily garrisoned and amply supplied; and its defence was entrusted by Ferrantino to the Marquis of Pescara, who almost alone among the Aragonese commanders remained true to him in the hour of defeat. Ferrantino himself, with the members of his family, took refuge in the Castel dell' Uovo, which stood on a lofty, sea-girt rock, and was connected with the land only by a narrow causeway ending in a drawbridge. Though secure from escalade, however, this fortress was exposed to gun-fire from the shore, and it was out of the question that the Royal refugees should remain there after the arrival of the French artillery. Accordingly, on 23rd February Ferrantino sailed for Ischia, whence, like his father, he could retire to Sicily whenever it should become plain that his cause in Naples was irretrievably ruined. As the boat bore him away, he looked back upon the scene of his former greatness, sadly repeating the words of the Psalmist: 'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.'

Torre San Vincenzo having been reduced without much

difficulty, the French sent Trivulzio to Pescara to require the surrender of the Castel Nuovo within twenty hours under a threat of putting the whole garrison to the sword if the place should resist and be captured by assault. 'To which the said Marquis of Pescara replied that he meant to hold out for twenty hours, twenty days, twenty months, twenty years, and, indeed, so long as he should live, for his great loyalty to his King and to the House of Aragon, under which he had been born and bred, for he desired to exhibit in his own person such a loyalty as could not be matched in all Italy.'[1] Brave words, if truly spoken; but unhappily for his reputation the pattern of fidelity deserted his post before Trivulzio's time limit expired. Abandoned by their King and forsaken by their leader, the garrison of the Castel Nuovo surrendered on 7th March, and soon afterwards the Castel dell' Uovo, greatly mutilated by the French guns, agreed to capitulate if not relieved within eight days. Everywhere throughout the Regno the same thing was happening; everywhere there was an epidemic of surrender, a scramble to acknowledge the King of France. Places like the citadel of Gaeta, which it would have been difficult or impossible to capture by assault, gave in without resistance. The Royal commissioners sent by Charles to receive the submission of the provinces were welcomed with the same enthusiasm with which the capital had greeted the King himself; and in a few weeks a spontaneous movement of revolt against Aragonese tyranny placed nearly the whole of the kingdom in the hands of the French.

Thus Charles had vindicated his Angevin claims, and clothed in a material form the fantastic vision which for so long had haunted his boyish imagination. He had 'conquered the realm of Naples', as Bacon said of him,[2] 'in a kind of felicity of a dream. He passed the whole length of Italy without resistance; so that it was true which Pope Alexander was wont to say, That the Frenchmen came into Italy with chalk in their hands to mark up their lodgings, rather than with swords to fight.' Like Julius

[1] M. Sanuto, *La Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, ed. R. Fulin, p. 242.

[2] 'The Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh', in the *Works*, ed. J. Spedding, vol. vi, p. 158.

Caesar, said Guicciardini,[1] he had come, seen, and conquered: he had never unfurled a tent, nor broken a lance, nor used a single ship in battle. One chronicler [2] pointed out how 'the Aragonese King's troops had never awaited the coming of the French; passes which were thought to be capable of holding out for months had offered no resistance whatever; thus the limit of the marching powers of the French had been the measure of their gains, for they might have occupied a thousand miles of country every day, if capable of marching so far'. Charles, said another chronicler,[3] who had no footing in Italy, and had never marshalled an army on a field of battle, had traversed in triumph a kingdom strong in men, in horses, and in warlike arts quicker than a peaceful traveller could have walked through it. He doubted not, he added, that to future ages his story would seem to be an invented tale rather than a statement of fact.[4] To the victors themselves it was plain that their incredible successes were patient of one explanation alone. Commynes at Venice, his colleague at Milan, the Royal master whom both served, all were agreed in the firm and certain belief that 'the conquest of Naples was no work of human hands, but was an operation proceeding from the Divine Omnipotence'.[5] 'Tell the bishops, cities, and good people of my kingdom', wrote Charles,[6] 'to return thanks to God for the favours He has shown me and the victory He has vouchsafed me in the recovery of Naples. . . . No one in Italy talks of anything but of my exploit and of my artillery, with which they have made an acquaintance somewhat differing from their expectations. Our nation has acquired the greatest honour and renown, and there is no more talk of Italy being the cemetery of the French.'

[1] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 91.

[2] Matarazzo, 'Cronaca della Città di Perugia', ed. Fabretti, in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. xvi, part ii, p. 23.

[3] Sig. dei Conti, *Le Storie de' suoi Tempi*, vol. ii, pp. 109–10.

[4] 'Non dubito fore, quin haec posteris non facta sed ficta videantur.'

[5] *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series III, vol. xx, p. 104.

[6] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, pp. 186–7.

XIII

THE LEAGUE OF VENICE

At the first sight of the city which they had conquered Charles and his companions were filled with admiration and delight. While 'a great, high mountain, which is for ever burning', caught the attention of the rank and file, who 'conjectured that it is Mount Etna, famous in history',[1] the King and his courtiers sent home glowing accounts of the wealth and beauty of Naples and of the marvels of art and nature which they had found on that enchanted coast. 'As for this country,' said one enthusiast,[2] 'nothing in the world could be better or more pleasant. There are fine pleasances and gardens, furnished with fountains, and full of citrons, oranges, and all the other fruits you can think of, of roses and other flowers, and of birds that sing more sweetly than any nightingale. Food is plentiful and cheap; there are fresh salmon, fat eels, and other good fish of strange sorts; and there are strong and heady Greek wines. Fodder for the horses is rather dear. The people are fairly pleasant, and feel, or feign, affection for us; but one has to be careful about making love to their womenfolk, for some of them are very jealous. However, we must teach them French ways, which, indeed, they are already beginning to learn.'

The Cardinal of Saint-Malo, who for the moment was not in his master's company, was told[3] by one of his officers how 'the King, before entering the town, slept one night at Poze Royal [Poggio Reale], a pleasure house made by King Ferrante and his predecessors, such that neither the tongue of Alain Chartier, nor the pen of Jehan de Meun, nor the pencil of Fouquet could describe or depict it. It is as far from the town as is Plessis from Tours, and from

[1] Bouchet, *Annales d'Aquitaine*, p. 312.

[2] La Pilorgerie, *Campagne et Bulletins de la Grande Armée d'Italie commandée par Charles VIII*, pp. 452–3.

[3] La Pilorgerie, *op. cit.*, pp. 196–7.

the gate of the town to the house there is a great drive all the way, with alleys branching off it in all directions. Around it is an incredible number of rosemaries, orange trees, and other trees that bear fruit in winter as well as in summer. The square walled garden is so fine that it would take a lifetime to describe it. Around the house are splendid fountains and aviaries full of all sorts of strange birds. On the further side of the fine park are great beasts in plenty, a warren for conies and hares, and coverts for pheasants and partridges. Everything that heart can desire is to be found here, and nobody could conceive of there being aught better within the reach of mortal man. Herein, I wot, lay all the happiness of preceding Kings'.

'Madame,' wrote the Cardinal himself to Anne of Britanny,[1] 'I wish that you could have seen this town and all its beautiful contents, for it is an earthly paradise. . . . The beauty of the place, so exquisitely laid out in pleasances, cannot be imagined. The King wishes that you were here: Amboise and all his places in France he holds now but in poor esteem. The kingdom is as valuable as it is lovely, and I believe its net revenues to amount to 1,200,000 or 1,300,000 *livres*, not counting the 500,000 *livres* formerly paid to the Aragonese, which the King has remitted, or the other sums of which the country used to be robbed.

'Madame, the King is using his best diligence to return to France, and has expressly charged me to help in expediting his affairs, so that he may return the more quickly. . . . I trust that with God's help he will be able to leave here about the 8th of April, and that he will have left Rome *en route* for France by the end of the month, ere the hot season sets in. He might quite well be at Grenoble or Lyons by the Feast of St. John, and I can assure you that I desire nothing so earnestly as to see him there. My lord himself, naturally enough, is likewise full of the same eager longing to see you, Madame, and his kingdom, too. He will have much to tell you about this place, and will make you long to come and see it. If only, when you meet again, you could give us a nice little boy or girl, this kingdom would make a fine inheritance for them. . . .

'Madame, the King, thank God, is very well. One day

[1] La Pilorgerie, *op. cit.*, pp. 218–21.

he complained of the effects of exposure by day and night in the trenches, when the two castles, Chasteauneuf and Chasteau de l'œuf, were taken; but now he is as fit as ever he was, and is absorbed by the question what apparel he should wear at the solemn entry and feast of investiture.'

'So far as I have seen this kingdom at present,' said Charles himself,[1] in recording his impressions upon the day of his arrival in Naples, 'it is a fine and fair country, full of goods and riches; and this city is in every respect as lovely and splendid a town as you could find.' After an interval of five weeks he wrote[2] again to his brother-in-law, the Duke of Bourbon, in tones of yet more enthusiastic delight: 'I beg leave to inform you that, as though small-pox did not suffice for the beautifying of my appearance, I have now had measles, but, thank God, have got over them. As for the rest, you could not believe what exquisite gardens[3] there are in this town; so wonderful is their beauty that it seems, I assure you, as if only Adam and Eve were wanting to turn them into an earthly paradise. I hope to tell you more when we meet. I have also found here some cunning painters, and will send some of them to you; they will paint you the most beautiful ceilings. The ceilings of Beauce, Lyons, and other places in France do not compare in beauty and richness with the ones here, so I shall engage some of these artists, and take them to work at Amboise.'

No less profound was the impression produced upon the minds of the French, when the capture of the Neapolitan

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, p. 177.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 187–8.

[3] The gardens which Charles so much admired were thus described by Sanuto in his *Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, pp. 238–40: 'El zardin dil Re era in loco alto, con muri grandi, arbori producono ogni generation de frutti, naranzeri et limoni, et conzati li fruteri a torno con li naranzeri parevano spaliere: et in capo di uno altro zardin era una habitation di assa bestie volative. . . . *Item*, uno altro ortesello tutto naranzeri, et limoni solamente; uno altro, chiamato paradiso, dove era limoni, zedri, naranze, pomi d'oro, zensamini et mirti in gran copia, salizato di pietre, et una bella fontana et una pissina. . . . Et el Re poteva venir in sti zardini dil castello per alcuni ponti levadori. . . . Lasserò le delicie havea il Re a Pozoreal, con le camere ornate d'oro et di seta; et in una de le qual era la coperta di panno d'oro sopra rizo, con uno moschetto damaschin, dove soleva dormir el Re talvolta l'istate.'

castles revealed the wealth which had been accumulated in those treasure-houses during the long years of Aragonese greed and Aragonese extortion. 'There was found the wardrobe which had been left by King Ferrante, since he could not take it away; it comprised much cloth-of-gold and many silks, to the value of 200,000 ducats, so that the French, who had been clad at the first in broadcloth after their fashion, began one and all to array themselves in silks.'[1] Paolo Giovio believed that in the contents of the Castel Nuovo the French took 'a noble booty, worth over a million in gold'; [2] and the accounts of eyewitnesses make it clear that Ferrante's wardrobe was by no means the most precious or most curious acquisition. When the castle opened its gates to the besiegers, they found in it vast quantities of wines, stores, and provisions; more drugs than had ever been seen in the whole of Paris; cloth-of-gold and cloth-of-silver, velvets, satins, and silks, and stuffs from Italy, France, Flanders, and England; dyed fabrics of all colours, various textiles, and rich tapestries; tents and pavilions, all made of precious stuffs, and oriental carpets; much leather of different kinds and of various workmanship; great stocks of harness, with innumerable saddles, bits, and bridles; three armouries full of armour, bows, cross-bows, rapiers, javelins, swords, and daggers; artillery and ammunition in terrifying quantities; numberless articles of the greatest richness in alabaster and marble, and gold and silver; much Venetian glass, many-hued cups and goblets, and Venetian pottery more beautiful and costly still. 'And I verily believe that at the time of King Alfonso's departure the place was the richest and best furnished in the world, and that all the possessions of the King, M. d'Orléans, and M. de Bourbon added together would not be as valuable as the contents of this castle.'[3]

In the letter of 28th March, from which I have already quoted, the King reported to Bourbon the progress of his enterprise, and discussed his plans for the future government of his newly acquired kingdom.[4] 'I have told you',

[1] Sanuto, *op. cit.*, p. 250. [2] *Istorie del suo Tempo*, vol. i, p. 70.
[3] 'Le Vergier d'Honneur', in *Archives curieuses*, vol. i, pp. 354–6.
[4] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, pp. 183–8 (abridged).

he wrote, 'of the surrender of the Castel Nuovo. Since then Don Frederic has come with seven or eight galleys to the Castel dell' Uovo, not to fight, but to treat of peace. He begged to be permitted to speak on behalf of Don Ferrand, his nephew, for whom he requested the title of King with a suitable allowance. I replied that before leaving France I had been advised by the learned councillors to whom I submitted my claim that Naples had been illegally and improperly usurped from my ancestors; and I said, further, that I had assumed the Royal title, and in passing through Rome had required to be invested by His Holiness the Pope. Thus I had no mind to give up aught of my heritage and title. However, for the honour of his House I had no wish to leave him destitute, and, should he be willing to come to France, I would give him an income of 60,000 *livres* a year, together with the command of some *gens d'armes*, and would arrange a suitable marriage alliance for him in my kingdom. Don Frederic retired to consult with his nephew on this offer, but did not come again with any reply.

'Thereupon I ranged my artillery against the Castel dell' Uovo, and the fire damaged it so much that by the 13th of this month the garrison had to demand a truce, which was followed on the 20th by a surrender. The citadel at Gaeta likewise surrendered at discretion yesterday; the pressure of my artillery was such that they had no chance to hold out for better terms. Camillo Pandone, the Viceroy of Apulia, has sent to acknowledge me and to offer the surrender of the Principality of Taranto.

'Every day without ceasing I apply myself to the establishment of law and order in this kingdom, which at my coming was in the greatest confusion, rich and poor alike suffering an extremity of oppression. To give proof of my consideration and affection for them, I have by the advice of my Council taken off a whole heap of charges and extraordinary exactions, amounting to 260,000 ducats yearly; wherewith they have been well content. . . . Justice being, as I have said, in the most deplorable state, I want a certain number of capable lawyers to put matters to rights; for this is a thing which the people of the country ardently desire. Find out what gentlemen of the

long robe there may be in France who would be willing to take service here. . . .

'As soon as I have provided for the safety of the country, I shall set out on my return, before the hot season sets in.'

To the reorganization of his newly won kingdom Charles brought the amiable intentions by which he was generally actuated, coupled with the infirmity of purpose that so frequently deprived those intentions of any effective realization. He declared to his new subjects that he came, not in a spirit of greed, nor with any desire to usurp what did not belong to him, but for the common weal, to deliver the kingdom from tyranny, to reinstate the lords in their fiefs, and to restore to every man that which was his. That he really intended to carry out the policy which he thus announced, is proved by the spontaneous expression of pity for an oppressed kingdom, of solicitude for its welfare, and of eagerness to remedy injustice and to restore order which in the private letter to his brother-in-law had accompanied the declaration of his hopes and plans. The same desire was evident in his first acts as King. Ferrante and Alfonso had persecuted the nobles on the pretext that they cherished Angevin sympathies, had deprived them of their dignities, and had confiscated their estates: Charles not only declared that the Angevin lords should be restored, but also proclaimed a complete amnesty for all who had served the Aragonese rulers. Those rulers had driven the monks from their monasteries and appropriated their possessions: the French sovereign decreed that they should be reinstated in their homes and in the enjoyment of their goods. Under the Aragonese dominion the people had staggered beneath a crushing burden of taxation, and had been brought to misery and ruin by iniquitous commercial monopolies: the monopolies were abolished, and by the stroke of the Royal pen that extinguished extraordinary exactions the taxpayer obtained relief to the extent of a quarter of a million ducats a year. To the grant by which the capital secured the confirmation of its privileges Charles added the concession of a wholly novel exemption from the liability to provide billets for troops. The Royal clemency and love of justice extended even to the evicted family of Aragon, and Charles directed that payment should be made in full

to the Queen Dowager of the dowry which she had enjoyed in happier days. There can be little doubt that he was animated by a genuine desire that a firm but benevolent authority should be substituted for the harsh and oppressive system of Aragonese rule; the land was once more to live under its ancient laws, and beneath the fostering and directing hand of French practitioners justice and equity were to be established once again in the courts where those laws were administered.

Had there been no need for Charles to think of any one but his new subjects, Naples might well have settled down in a contented loyalty to its new master. Charles, however, was constrained by circumstance to think also of his old subjects, of those companions of his adventure by whose exertions he had won his throne. For their sakes he must make that throne secure, for it was upon its stability that their safety hinged; and to stabilize the throne, money must somehow be obtained. Accordingly, he was obliged to refuse to listen, when the Neapolitans petitioned for the abolition of a hearth-tax of recent origin, and even to demand that one-half of the tax on flocks and herds, which would fall due for payment in April, should be advanced forthwith. These measures threw a cold douche upon the fervent loyalty kindled by the initial remission of Aragonese imposts, and a disillusioned populace, which had expected the dawn of a golden age, began to reckon up the sum of its gains under the new régime. When examined in a critical temper, the entries on the credit side of the ledger seemed to assume a meagre appearance, and with every day that passed some new and weighty item had to be inscribed on the other side of the account. The most important posts in the Government, many of the great offices of State, high judicial appointments, and nearly all the estates which had passed to Charles from the exiled Royal family and its adherents, were conferred upon Frenchmen. With the exception of Ferrante's renegade secretary, the author, Pontano, not one Neapolitan found a seat on the Council, which was composed of the Cardinal of Saint-Malo, the King's uncle, Philippe de Bresse, the Counts of Ligny and Montpensier, Marshal de Gié and Louis de la Trémoille, de Vesc, d'Aubigny, Miolans, and Ganay, a

distinguished lawyer, First President of the Parlement of Paris. Montpensier became Viceroy of Naples, d'Aubigny Governor of Calabria, l'Esparre of Apulia. De Vesc was made Captain of Gaeta and Grand Chamberlain of the kingdom, an office which carried with it the presidency of the Chambre des Comptes and control of the exchequer; he also received the Duchies of Ascoli and Nola and the Counties of Avellino and Atripalda. Capua was given to Cardinal Giulio della Rovere. Angry and jealous, the Neapolitian nobility complained that they were like to become vassals in their own houses, with the French for suzerains.

There were other grievances, by which all classes of the population were affected; for already the Gallic temperament had developed the characteristics which make of the Frenchman in victory a very different being from the Frenchman in defeat. Wholly admirable in their fortitude under reverses, in their patient endurance of an adverse fortune, and in the industry, thrift, and quiet courage with which they set themselves to efface the ravages of war and rebuild the shattered structure of the State, the French in more than one period of their history have tended to display a spirit of arrogant and tactless aggression in the hour of success. This national foible they exhibited in overpowering measure in their relations with the conquered population of Naples. 'Their diligence and prudence', as Guicciardini remarked,[1] 'were not equal to their good luck, and their rule was utterly negligent, slovenly, and chaotic; for grown more than usually insolent in their great prosperity, they left to chance even matters of real moment, and thought of nothing but feasting and pleasure, whilst those in authority about the King set to work to extract in secret as much fruit as possible from their victory, without the smallest consideration for the honour or advantage of their Prince.' The fact was that the heads of the invaders had been turned by the phenomenal success of their campaign; and for a people which seemed to possess no warlike qualities they felt a contempt which they were at no pains to conceal. Members of the old Angevin families, to conciliate whom should have been the first care of an Angevin claimant, found themselves debased to an equality of

[1] *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 109.

humiliation with the most rabid adherents of Aragon. It was not merely that they took no share in the redistribution of offices, honours, and estates, though that would have been galling enough; but the French Government seemed to go out of its way to balk them in the recovery of their patrimonial properties, whilst the King and his courtiers neglected to pay to them even the small attentions of ordinary civility. It was but seldom that any of them were admitted to audience of the King, and during weary hours of fruitless waiting in the Royal antechambers they would find themselves the objects of insulting remarks and the butts of an insolent and cruel wit.

Another disastrous result of the conceit and negligence in high quarters was the relaxation of the bonds of that strict military discipline by which alone an invading army can be kept to the path of honesty and decorum. Already in the autumn of the previous year Caterina Sforza had indignantly complained[1] that 'the French, for all that they are our allies, are of a bestial nature, and so devoid of discipline that they pay no heed to their officers and leaders, who, as I know, are much displeased by their excesses'. If such a judgement could be passed by a friend in the early days of the campaign, it may be supposed that the licence of the invaders would be a hundredfold augmented when after a triumphal military promenade, in which they had met with scarcely a show of resistance, they found themselves in occupation of a conquered country, quartered upon a people whom they despised, left by an improvident Government without control and often without pay, and exposed to the manifold temptations of the seductive land which seems to possess in a peculiar degree the knack of destroying a soldier's morale. They had not been many weeks in Naples when a Venetian observer reported that the whole army was in a state of complete demoralization. They had attacked the quarters, looted the houses, and seized the possessions of the Jews and Moorish converts, to whom the King had promised his protection. Wherever they found a good horse in a man's stable, they took it on the pretext that it must have been stolen from the ex-King's stud. They quartered themselves as they pleased

[1] Pasolini, *Caterina Sforza*, vol. i, p. 347, and vol. iii, p. 224.

on the houses of the Neapolitans, merely because those houses had once been included in some French quartermaster's list of billets. When installed there, they exhibited an insolence and wanton extravagance that outraged all the feelings of a refined and provident race. The uninvited guest would take the best rooms for himself, and leave the worst for his unwilling host; he would empty his cellar and purloin his wardrobe; he would eat his food and spoil or sell his stores; and it would be well for the women-folk of the household if they had nothing more serious to complain of than the forcible theft of rings and jewellery from their hands and persons. 'Unable to tolerate such iniquities any longer, the sufferers went and complained to the King, who showed much displeasure at such acts of violence; but not having enough money to give to so large an army, not, indeed, being able to give the troops their pay, he could not very readily apply a remedy. However, some marauders being caught red-handed, he had six of them hanged, a thing which excited no small alarm. But the measure was long overdue, for the Neapolitans were already desperate, and longed to repay the French for all that they had suffered at their hands.' [1]

Truly as Charles might deplore the licence of his troops, there was one sphere in which he himself set the most baleful example. Even amidst the dissolute manners of Renaissance Italy the libertinism of the King of France excited comment. As the historian of his expedition remarks, it was not very probable that a monarch who under the eyes of his Queen had succumbed to the charms of the fair Lyonnaises would remain insensible to the seductive attractions of the ladies of Naples. His weakness was notorious, and the Duchess of Melfi, the wife of a prominent Angevin, saw that it might be turned to account. By a former marriage she had a daughter, Leonora di Marzano, who was the heiress of an estate granted by Alfonso to her father, but now resumed by its former Angevin owner. Of this estate the Duchess hoped to regain possession by means of her daughter's beauty, charm, and talent. She therefore presented Leonora to the King. One of the girl's accomplishments was an unusual pro-

[1] Sanuto, *La Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, p. 267.

ficiency in the saddle, and in the presence of the King she gave a display of equestrian skill which astonished the whole Court, managing a mettlesome courser with consummate ease, and showing a serene indifference to its wildest plunges and its most disconcerting tricks. Charles looked on with admiration and delight, and it was not long before the fair and fearless horsewoman had entered upon the position of his acknowledged favourite.[1]

Even had the King's conduct been other than it was, his companions would perhaps have succumbed as easily to the temptations by which they were assailed. The whole army, as Sanuto expressed it, was unremitting in its worship of Bacchus, and Venus followed in Bacchus' train.[2] Contemporary Italian authors of histories and chronicles nearly all include the violation of women in the list of atrocities of which they accuse the French; and it was not unlikely that some regrettable incidents would occur, when an idle, drunken, and dissolute soldiery was let loose in uncontrolled disorder upon a defenceless population. Commynes, however, who allowed the justice of many Italian complaints, declared emphatically that this particular charge was a fabrication of hostile propagandists;[3] and the learned historian of the expedition feels justified in concluding that the French were guilty of few crimes of violence against Neapolitan women.[4] Had such crimes really been of frequent occurrence, they would have been rendered the more reprehensible by the presence of the numerous courtesans who had accompanied the army and by the facilities for vice which were freely offered by a corrupt civilization. Of those who availed themselves of these facilities the majority were overtaken by a swift and terrible retribution. Just before the French invasion, syphilis, till then unknown in Europe, had been introduced into Italy either from Spain or through the channel of her Eastern trade,[5] and the presence of large bodies of foreign troops soon gave it a rapid dissemination. 'As the French

[1] Delaborde, *L'Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*, pp. 576–7.

[2] Sanuto, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

[3] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 150: and see below, p. 332.

[4] Delaborde, *op. cit.*, pp. 575–6.

[5] See the note at the end of this chapter.

were newly come to Italy,' explained the chronicler who recorded the new phenomenon,[1] 'the Italians believed that the disease had come from France, whilst the French, to whom it was new, supposed it to be a malady prevalent in Italy; the Italians accordingly called it the French disease, and the French called it the Italian disease.' By whatever name it might be called, the thing was as loathsome and as deadly; and not the least momentous of the consequences of Charles VIII's invasion of Italy was the dissemination through Europe of the dread scourge which has contributed more effectually than any other single agency to swell the misery and suffering of mankind.

One or two contemporary versions of the doings of the French in Naples are worth quoting as illustrations or expansions of my account.[2]

A correspondent of the Marquis of Mantua, writing to him on 13th April, expressed his conviction that the French would never be able to retain the kingdom, such were their continuous misbehaviour, their lack of decency, and their careless indifference. Nearly two months after their arrival the troops were still quartered in and around the capital, the men without proper quarters, and the horses without litter; no effective steps had been taken to restore order; and nobody concerned himself with aught but booty, which was the sole preoccupation of them all. As a result, everybody was thoroughly disgusted, and the Turk himself would have got a welcome, as being likely to behave with greater justice and more humanity. Rapacious in all business relationships, the French would extort fifty or a hundred ducats for every favour they granted, and then as often as not would cancel their own grant on the pretext that they had not understood the matter; yet they had understood well enough how to fill their own purses, and the general belief was that the secretaries had pocketed thirty thousand ducats by their dishonest methods. The King of France troubled little about affairs, rarely gave audience, made no effort to win the affection of the people, and permitted his

[1] Matarazzo, 'Cronaca di Perugia', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. xvi, part ii, p. 34. He discusses the whole unsavoury subject at some length, pp. 32–6.

[2] For other evidence see the Appendix, pp. 324–32.

wolves of servants to devour what they pleased. On the rare occasions when some complaint reached his ears, he would command that justice should be done; but he was not obeyed. Amongst his people Montpensier had the best reputation, and was the least soiled by the prevalent mania for peculation; he had promised to put a stop to the disorders; but the malefactors were so numerous that reform seemed to be an impossibility. Naples was unrecognizable, and discontent was rife.[1]

About the same time a Venetian merchant trading with Naples drew the following picture of the French army of occupation. 'The French are indolent, dirty, and dissolute. They care for nothing but carnal pleasures. They keep their tables always laid, and never clear away nor tidy up. In billeting themselves on the houses of Naples they have always taken the best rooms for themselves, and left the worst for the owners. They take the wine from the cellars and the corn, to sell them in the market. They seize the women, without respect for any one, and afterwards strip them of their rings, and, if they resist, cut off their fingers. They spend a long time in the churches at prayer. . . . The King goes about the country, sometimes with a mounted suite of a hundred persons, sometimes with less than sixteen, without order or Royal decorum. He is liberal but penniless, while his courtiers are rich and dress in silk. . . . In a word, the French are on the worst terms with the Neapolitans, who would rather be governed by any one else, of any nationality whatsoever. The houses are without doors or windows, all of them having been burnt by the occupants in preference to buying wood. The citizens have left the town as fast as they could, abandoning their houses and possessions, and have gone into the country. As for the women, these folk treat them only with violence, despite husbands, fathers, and brothers. On one occasion a lord entered the house of a citizen who had a very lovely daughter. He required to be served with dinner, and insisted that the daughter should be present. He then told the father—with many promises, it is true—that he had made up his mind to possess her. The poor

[1] *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series V, vol. xxxiv, pp. 363–4; *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series III, vol. xx, p. 403.

father said that he would like to consult with his wife and his son. The daughter being resolved not to submit to such an affront, and yet being powerless to resist it, the son advised her to arrange a tryst with the Frenchman, and this was done. At the appointed hour he came and took her into a bedchamber; but before he could touch her the brother rushed in and killed him, and then escaped. The father went in tears to tell the tale to the King, who showed much displeasure, declaring that the Frenchman had deserved death. 'Fetch your son here,' he then said, 'and I will pardon him.' The son appeared, but no sooner had he knelt down at the King's feet than the French murdered him; nor did the King do anything to them. It was notorious that the King himself took his pleasure with a nun taken from the Convent of Santa Chiara as well as with his favourite, la Melfi, and many other women whom his people procured for him.' [1]

There are few subjects of historical inquiry in which it is more difficult to feel satisfied that one has reached the truth than in the examination of charges of atrocities brought against an invading army, for the one thing certain is that the truth will be obscured in equal measure by the baseless fabrications of one party to the dispute and by the unwarrantable denials of the other. A conquered people rarely loves its conquerors, and in the Italian indictment of the French there was doubtless some exaggeration, the natural product of racial antipathy and of an injured national pride. A certain amount of obloquy would also attach to the French by reason of their association with the Swiss, for those indomitable fighters were always to the fore when any devilry was afoot, and a people suffering the consequences of their rapacity, intemperance, and lust would inevitably lay the blame for their misdeeds upon the shoulders of the nation which had enrolled them beneath its standards. But that the complaints were in the main well founded is regretfully admitted by Philippe de Commynes, who knew the facts. When the French entered Italy, he said, they would have been welcomed by all the peoples of the peninsula, if only they had managed their affairs properly, and conducted themselves with common

[1] Sanuto, *Spedizione*, pp. 344–5.

honesty and decorum. Unhappily, however, it was the exact opposite of this which happened, and it filled him with grief to think of the opportunity which they thus lost of turning their enterprise to their honour and glory among the Italians, who believed in their good faith and humanity, and were ready to adore them as saints. As things turned out, that sentiment did not long survive the experience of French lawlessness and rapacity or the ubiquitous enemy propaganda which held them up to execration as the perpetrators of crimes of violence against women and the robbers of everything upon which they could lay their hands. And in Italy no more damning charges than these could have been formulated, for the Italians were exceptionally jealous and inordinately avaricious. 'As to the women, they lied, but in other respects there was some truth in what they said.' [1]

In Naples also, when he came to tell the story of the French occupation, Commynes could make but a lame defence of the conduct of his compatriots. 'The King conferred great favours upon the people and lightened their fiscal burden; and I am certain that this people, inconstant though it was, would not for its part have turned against us, had he but done some little thing to satisfy the nobles. But he never received them, and they were insulted at his doors. Those best treated were avowed adherents of the House of Aragon; but everybody lost something, and not an office or appointment was left to them, the Angevins being even worse treated than the Aragonese. An edict, said to have been obtained by bribing President de Ganay and the Seneschal [de Vesc], who had lately been made Duke of Nola and Grand Chamberlain of the kingdom, decreed that all holders of properties should be confirmed in their possession; the result was to make it impossible for the Angevins to recover their estates except by litigation; and those who had resumed possession on their own account, like the Count of Celano, were forcibly ejected. All offices and appointments were bestowed on Frenchmen, often two or three on the same recipient. The stores found in the castle of Naples when it was captured, which were very great, as the King was well aware, he gave away to all

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 150.

who asked for them. . . . The conclusion is plain, that the conduct of this great affair had been no achievement of its leaders but entirely the work of God. The great faults I have mentioned, however, these were the work of men—of men made blind by glory, who did not recognize the source of their good fortune, and behaved themselves as was natural in persons of their character and experience.' [1]

Happy in the enjoyment of their success, and absorbed in idle pleasures, Charles and his advisers cared nothing for Neapolitan opinion, and gave no heed to the probable consequences of French misdeeds. Yet it required no great acumen to conjecture what those consequences were likely to be; and the French occupation was but a few weeks old when in the breasts of an injured people there began the secret movements of a volcanic activity which might some day break out in swift and sudden eruption, submerging the oppressor beneath the molten torrent of its pent-up fury. 'At this time the reputation of the French had already begun sensibly to decline in the Kingdom of Naples, because, occupied with their pleasures, and leaving government to chance, they had not troubled to drive the Aragonese from the few places they still held, as they might easily have done while fortune favoured them. Their popularity had diminished yet more sensibly, for though the King had shown himself liberal and kind, granting privileges and exemptions throughout the kingdom to the tune of more than 200,000 ducats a year, yet other business was not conducted with due order and prudence. Disinclined for business and for the audiences in which men advance their complaints and requests, he left the burden of affairs entirely to his advisers, who, partly by incapacity and partly through avarice, made a mess of everything. The nobles were neither rewarded nor graciously received; they found the utmost difficulty in gaining access to the Royal presence; no distinctions were made between one man and another; merit was not recognized unless by accident; the enemies of the House of Aragon were not confirmed in their sentiments; many difficulties and delays interfered with the restitution of honours and possessions to the Angevin faction and to the other Barons who had

[1] Commynes, *op. cit.*, pp. 199–201.

been driven out by the elder Ferdinand; grace and favours were reserved for those who secured them by corrupt or unusual methods, many being injured without cause and many benefited without reason; nearly all the offices and many possessions were given to the French, to whom were assigned, to the general disgust, nearly all the demesne lands, that is, the estates held direct of the Crown; matters all the more distasteful in that the Neapolitans were accustomed to the sage and orderly methods of government followed by their old Kings, and had secured countless promises from the new. Add to this the natural swagger of the French, increased by an easy victory; a good conceit of themselves which induced them to hold all Italians in contempt; the overbearing insolence of the men-at-arms, who in all their billets behaved as ill as possible. The result was that the ardent longing with which they had been desired had turned to as ardent a hate; whilst, on the contrary, the old hatred for the Aragonese had been succeeded by a feeling of compassion for Ferdinand, a general belief in his good qualities, and a memory of the gentleness and constancy of his demeanour on the day of his valedictory address. Hence the city of Naples and nearly all the kingdom sought for an opportunity to recall the Aragonese with as much eagerness as a few short months before they had desired their destruction. A certain popularity began to attach even to the much loathed name of Alfonso; that which during his direction of domestic affairs in his father's lifetime had been denounced as cruelty was now spoken of as a just severity, and that which had long been hated as haughtiness and pride was now admired as straightforward sincerity. Such is the nature of peoples, immoderate alike in their hopes and in their impatience of necessary burdens, and invariably dissatisfied with their present lot; and this was especially the case with the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Naples, noted above all the people of Italy for their fickleness and love of change.' [1]

Such, then, was the conduct of the army of occupation in Naples. And then upon its light-hearted gaiety, upon its jousts and revels, upon its amorous dallying and care-free enjoyment of success, suddenly and ominously, like thunder

[1] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, pp. 114–15.

out of a cloudless sky, there broke news of such an import as to dash into nothingness the flimsy structure of Charles' ephemeral triumph.

To comprehend the import of this intelligence, and to watch the genesis of the events which were to work so dramatic a metamorphosis in the young sovereign's fortunes, we must retrace our steps to northern Italy and accompany Philippe de Commynes upon a diplomatic mission which was destined to prove more momentous than he surmised. Commynes had been appointed French ambassador at Venice in the summer of 1494, and towards the end of September he had left Asti to enter upon his duties. At that time the seemingly fantastic ambitions of the young French ruler were not taken very seriously by the sober statesmen who governed the great mercantile Republic; as yet they saw no necessity, and felt no inclination, to break their traditional friendship with the monarchy beyond the Alps; and the ambassador upon his arrival had no cause to complain of the cordiality of his reception. A large and distinguished company came out to greet him in the name of the Senate, and as he entered Venice in a richly appointed State barge, seated in the post of honour between the envoys of Ferrara and Milan, he was free to note with a discriminating eye the evidences of material prosperity which were visible on every side, and the triumphs of architecture and art which for many a traveller before and since have made the first glimpse of Venice an inspiration and an enchanted memory. His business was with political cares, however, not with aesthetic pleasures, and his duty was to lay before the Signory the arguments upon which his master relied for securing its adhesion to his projects.

In his first public audience Commynes thanked the Senate in his master's name for their favourable reception of the last Royal envoy, for the orders given to their Admiral to treat the ships and subjects of the King as their own, and for the assurances of friendship which had been furnished to His Majesty. He begged them to disabuse their minds of the notion that Charles had ever harboured projects inimical to the liberties of Italy. Two objects he had, and two only—the conquest of Naples, which was his by right, and the crusade against the Turk. No one else was menaced,

and no one else need be afraid. Unjust seizures were not in the tradition of the French Crown, and his intention, when he had established his title to Naples, was to restore all the lords to their estates, so that he himself, who must bear the cost of government, would get very little out of it. The Pope would not suffer, for he would still receive his annual tribute from Naples, when the French should have become its masters. Nor did the King mean to occupy any places belonging to the Church, and Ostia should be restored to Cardinal della Rovere, who was its Bishop. It was, indeed, true that His Majesty, while sending one army corps to the camp in the Ferrarese, intended with another to occupy the strong places of the Florentines; but the assistance which they had given to the enemies of France made this step necessary both as a punishment and as a precaution; provided that they would give him a free passage through their territories, none of those strong places would be retained; and he would permit them to do as they pleased about keeping Piero de' Medici or altering their mode of government.

In a private audience which followed, the ambassador dealt with a few points which he had reserved as being rather too delicate for public discussion. It had been suggested, he said, that Venice would view with disfavour the establishment of a powerful monarchy in Naples: no doubt the suggestion was untrue; but if the Republic desired a closer alliance with France, it might be obtained for the asking. As a matter of fact, His Majesty, if he were to acquire Naples, would stand in greater need of the Venetians than they of him, for whilst, on the one hand, he would derive small benefit from his conquest after reinstating the evicted Neapolitan barons, on the other, his existing dominions required incessant protection against the assaults of jealous and restless neighbours. If the Signory would give him the help of ten or twenty galleys and five hundred or a thousand horse, he would reward them with a port on the Neapolitan coast, which they might keep until he could offer them in exchange some more advantageous place in Greece; for the giving of such help would discourage Alfonso, and quicken the successful completion of the enterprise. In any case, whether they

might help him or no, his gratitude would remain as lively, his affection as constant; and after the enterprise had been accomplished, he would be glad to take counsel with them about the reform of the Church and other matters touching the welfare of Christendom.

The official reply of the Signory, delivered upon 9th October, was a good specimen of those evasive pronouncements in which Venetian statesmen were adepts. Venice, it was declared, entertained a profound respect for His Majesty and his Royal House, and the friendly attitude of which he had expressed his appreciation was inspired by their true devotion. Being well aware of the King's love of justice and equity, they accepted his account of his enterprise, and, feeling no suspicion on that score, they saw no occasion to strengthen the existing alliance. That which chiefly concerned the Republic was the progress of the Turk, victorious in Croatia, menacing in Bosnia, and repelled only by miracle before Belgrade. The inner meaning of this non-committal answer might be conjectured: in so far as the efforts of France were really directed against the infidel enemies of the Republic, Charles might count upon the sympathies of Venetians; but he must look for a chillier sentiment in so far as those efforts were directed against the liberties of Italy, which seemed to be the most reasonable inference from the course of events.[1]

Commynes had not been long in Venice when he became aware that many a dangerous current was beginning to flow beneath those calm, still waters whereon the Queen of the Adriatic rode in stately splendour. 'When all Italy and the rest of Christendom saw that without drawing his sword from the scabbard the King of France had acquired the Kingdom of Naples, famous throughout the world, and that many lands, cities, and fortresses had surrendered to him, all became concerned about their own position . . . and all the Italian powers turned to the quarter where the greatest might was to be found. In the renowned and famous city of Venice, during the months of February and March 1495, were assembled the ambassadors of all the powers in

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, pp. 213–14; Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Lettres et négociations de Philippe de Commines*, vol. ii, pp. 111–18; Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, vol. v, pp. 44–7.

the world: first the representative of Pope Alexander VI, a Legate *a latere*; then four ambassadors from Maximilian, King of the Romans and Emperor Elect; an orator from Charles VIII, King of France; one from Ferdinand and Isabella, King and Queen of Spain; two from Ludovic, Duke of Milan; one from the Turk; and representatives of Pesaro, Mantua, Ferrara, Rimini, and all the States of Italy; to learn the intentions of our exalted Signory as being the mother of Italy and defender of the Church; for without the help and favour of Venice all were faced with the prospect of ruin.'[1] All the fears, all the jealousies, all the hatred, all the greed, which the triumphal progress of French arms was exciting—whither should they turn but to the great and rich Republic which stood to lose so much by the rude irruption of the barbarians into her preserves? The threatened Alfonso implored succour, confessed with contrition the error of his ways, bid ever higher and higher for the aid of Venice, and, with an eloquence that grew with his fears, enlarged upon the dangers by which she herself was threatened by the French King's enterprise. His eternal hatred of France strengthened by a new fear for the safety of his Mediterranean possessions, the King of Spain argued earnestly for intervention. Affronted, angry, afraid, the Pope alternately threatened and cajoled. Fearful lest Charles should make use of the Turkish Pretender, Prince Djem, to launch his advertised crusade, the Sultan sent messages half of menace and half of promise. Maximilian, jealous and disillusioned, added his voice to the diplomatic chorus, plying the Senate with alarming tales of French ambitions and French designs. Even Ludovic of Milan, who had brought all the trouble upon Italy, began to manifest the growing intensity of his desire to rid himself of his dangerous allies. To these appeals and suggestions the Senate had made fair but evasive answer, so long as it had not taken French projects seriously, nor distrusted the initial assurances of Ludovic that he could send Charles back across the Alps when he pleased. But that complacency could not long subsist in the face of the events which were in progress; the successes of the

[1] Priuli, 'De Bello Gallico', in Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. xxiv, cols. 16–17.

invader became more and more alarming in their swiftness and completeness; and as the conquering armies of France marched on upon their victorious career, the ears of Venice began to pay increasing heed to the solicitations of those who were plotting their destruction.

The chief architect of the plot was Ferdinand of Spain. Nowhere outside Naples itself had the French invasion of Italy aroused a livelier apprehension than in the Court of the Spanish sovereigns. By his marriage with the heiress of Castille and by the victorious issue of the Granadine war Ferdinand had placed his country in the forefront of the centralized powers which were arising in Europe, and he viewed with fear and hatred the progress of the neighbour and rival which bid fair to outstrip him in the race. Subjects of discord already existed in the disputed possession of Roussillon and Cerdagne and in the rivalry for influence in the turbulent little border kingdom of Navarre; but that discord took on a deeper note, when France, having become a Mediterranean power by her acquisition of Provence, began to use her new position as the foundation of a new policy. Spain herself occupied a place among the Mediterranean powers second only to that of Venice. The greater part of her littoral was washed by the waters of the Mediterranean; the Balearic Isles, Sardinia, and Sicily acknowledged her dominion. At one time she had herself owned the Kingdom of Naples; and although Alfonso the Magnanimous, who had won for her that possession, had afterwards deprived her of it by leaving it to his bastard son, nevertheless by her *entente* with Ferrante and, more lately, by the close co-operation between Ferdinand and the Spanish Pontiff, she had contrived to keep the whole of southern Italy within her sphere of influence. To keep intruders out of that sphere was one of the main objects of the foreign policy of Spain; and no intrusion could be more alarming than that threatened by Charles VIII's enterprise, by which Spanish influence would be demolished. Moreover, a further consequence would be to establish a powerful rival in dangerous proximity to Ferdinand's Sicilian possessions; and Sicily, strategically valuable as a maritime base, was economically indispensable as the granary of an arid and sterile land.

A French seizure of Naples was therefore the very last thing to which Spain would tamely submit. But Ferdinand was wont to frame his plans with Machiavellian astuteness, and to pursue them with the most cynical indifference to all interests but his own. He perceived that there would be all the difference in the world between a permanent French occupation of Naples and its transient subjugation by the armies of the scatter-brained Charles; and he thought that, whilst the former event would constitute an intolerable evil, the latter might turn out to be a blessing in disguise. The Royal House of Aragon, of which he was the head, had its own claims to the Neapolitan throne, and those claims it had never abandoned, and might at a convenient season revive. So long as Aragon had stood in need of help to preserve her influence in Italy, Ferdinand had made a great parade of cousinly affection for his relatives in Naples, telling them that he regarded their interests as his own, and assuring them that the safety of Aragon was no nearer to his heart than the security of Naples.[1] But circumstances alter cases, and after the unification of Spain Ferdinand suddenly bethought him that the cousin whom he had sworn never to desert was really the bastard usurper of an Aragonese inheritance. Provided he could be sure of evicting them from their conquests, it might be no bad thing to let the French invade Italy. An invasion, if not too successful, would damage or destroy the power of the usurper, would call attention to his illegal tenure of the throne, and would leave the field clear for the entry of the legitimist claimant. 'If the ultimate object were to turn out the illegitimate line, it would be all to the good, if Charles should first weaken them. To permit the French to break the power of Naples was to make use of a rival as an assistant, and at one and the same moment to make two dupes.'[2]

To free his hands for the pursuit of this daring policy, Ferdinand must first disembarrass himself of the obligations

[1] 'Por el qual somos amonestados de reputar vuestras cosas por proprias, . . y como a la deffension del Estado y cosas de Vuestra Serenidad nos no faltaremos menos que a nuestra propria salud faltar podriamos': cited by J. Calmette, 'La Politique espagnole dans l'Affaire des Barons napolitains (1485–1492)', in the *Revue Historique*, vol. cx (1912), p. 240.

[2] J. Calmette, 'La France et l'Espagne à la Fin du Quinzième Siècle', in the *Revue des Pyrénées*, vol. xvi (1904), p. 112.

imposed upon him by the treaty of Barcelona, by which he had recovered possession of Roussillon and Cerdagne. To do this, he availed himself of the provision—a matter of common form in the treaties of the time—which reserved the rights of the Church.[1] Just as Charles was starting out from France, a Spanish ambassador, Alonso da Silva, presented himself and delivered the message of the cunning Ferdinand: his master could not but approve the project for a crusade against the infidels, but must decline to accept the French pretensions to Naples; if Charles would not renounce them, let him submit them to the Pope's arbitration, and Ferdinand would abide by the result; otherwise, he must decline to be bound any longer by the treaty of Barcelona, for Naples was a fief of the Church, and the treaty itself had recognized the paramount duty of defending the Pope. The embassy which, as recorded upon an earlier page, had come up with the King at Velletri, had been a further step in the process of reducing the treaty of Barcelona to the level of 'a scrap of paper'.

That he might be in readiness for appropriate action when the moment should come, Ferdinand also pressed on with his naval and military preparations during the summer and autumn of 1494, and by the end of the year a considerable armada rode at anchor in the harbours of Galicia and Guipuscoa. The command of the land forces which this armada was to transport to Sicily was entrusted to a young man whose handling of those forces would soon win for him the proud title of the Great Captain. Gonsalvo de Cordova was picked out for this promotion by the discriminating eye of Ferdinand's Queen. By his beauty of person and grace of manner, by his bravery and proficiency in all knightly accomplishments, and, be it added, by his extravagant ostentation and display, he had from his youth up been a conspicuous figure in the Spanish Court; and during the Moorish war he had given proof that his brilliant exterior was but the casket in which were enshrined the jewels of diplomatic ability and of military genius. Before the French had entered Naples, Gonsalvo had reached Sicily at the head of seven hundred cavalry and of six

[1] 'Vicario Christi excepto': Dumont, *Corps universel diplomatique*, vol. iii, part ii, p. 298.

thousand foot; a fleet of fifty Spanish vessels was assembled in Sicilian ports; and at the same time a force of five hundred men-at-arms awaited the word of command within the walls of Perpignan.

Despite these offensive preparations, Ferdinand had no intention of taking upon his own shoulders the burden of driving the French from Italy. That task, as he well knew, might place upon his unaided strength a strain which it could not bear, and his plan was to incite others to undertake the expulsion, whilst holding himself in readiness to lend a helping hand, so far as might be convenient and profitable. He was well aware that the astonishing successes of the French had aroused fear, envy, and greed in the breasts of all their neighbours; and hoping to repeat upon a larger scale the novel experiment of the Breton war, he designed to rear upon that trinity of ugly feelings the edifice of a European coalition.

Amongst the various powers which he approached, Ferdinand found but two indisposed to entertain his overtures. In the eyes of Henry VII of England war was an extravagance which exceptional circumstances alone could justify; he had to protect his own throne against the attempts of Perkin Warbeck, insidiously aided from abroad; and, moreover, to declare war on France was to ensure the loss of the indemnity secured at Étaples, which the French King's costly escapade had already placed in jeopardy. For the time being Henry therefore preferred to stand aside as an impartial spectator of Continental quarrels. Nor could the Republic of Florence be induced to declare against Charles. Florence had been severely tried by the French seizure of her places; she was deeply suspicious of Charles' attitude towards the exiled Medicis; and she had suffered a mortal affront in the encouragement which had favoured, if it had not actually caused, the Pisan rebellion. Ferdinand took it for granted that her ancient partiality for France must have declined under these adverse influences; and to some extent he was right; but the dominant motive in Florentine policy was the recovery of Pisa; and the best hope of recovering Pisa was, she thought, to remain on good terms with the French, who had solemnly guaranteed its restitution.

Elsewhere the sly whisperings of Spanish diplomacy were addressed to attentive ears. Of the Pope's attitude no fears need be entertained. Pro-Spanish and pro-Neapolitan in his policy both by instinct and by conviction, Alexander VI was afraid of the French, and detested the notion of their establishment in Naples. They had already laid impious hands upon the Patrimony : if they were to stay in Italy, the Papacy would live in bondage amid the ruins of Italian freedom. The situation in which he found himself, however, called for circumspection. Under the stress of circumstances he had made a solemn treaty with the invaders, though 'many, who knew the Spaniard's disposition, said that this treaty, which was, as it were, an enforced one, would not long endure. . . . The Pope had agreed to everything . . . as though already convinced that he might disregard an oath to which he had been shamefully constrained by force and fear, to the detriment of the Papal Majesty.' [1] That which troubled him at the suggestion of an infraction was not so much a regard for his plighted word as the fear of immediate and solitary exposure to the wrath of Charles. The escape of Cesare Borgia from Velletri having relieved him of some of his apprehensions, he had gone as far as he dared in manifesting his continued hostility to the French, lodging appeals with Maximilian and protests with the Signory of Venice. Ferdinand's influence had borne no small part in the determination of his policy. The Spanish ambassador at the Papal Court was Garcilasso de la Vega, a personage who 'with rare political sagacity combined an energy of purpose which could not fail to infuse courage into the hearts of others. He urged the Pope to rely on his master, the King of Aragon, who, he assured him, would devote all his resources, if necessary, to the protection of his person, honour, and estate.' [2] Torn by conflicting emotions and 'letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would"', His Holiness might hesitate at first to join the projected coalition ; but in the firm hands of his energetic representative Ferdinand could leave him with the pleasant assurance that at length the diffident sheep would safely be shepherded within the diplomatic fold.

[1] Paolo Giovio, *Istorie del suo Tempo*, trans. Domenichi, vol. i, pp. 55–6.
[2] Prescott, *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella*, p. 383.

The other great European figure-head required more tactful handling. When the King of the Romans had come to terms with Charles at Senlis, he had done so with the intention of abiding by his bargain. Whilst he himself was for the moment pacifically disposed by the usual internal difficulties in Germany and by the perennial scarcity of cash, his Court contained a strong pro-French party, which opposed the notion of an anti-Gallic demonstration in Italy. Two considerations, which weighed heavily with Maximilian, pointed in the same direction. In the first place, he was at loggerheads with Venice over certain Friulian territories, and a quarrel with Venice might result in the acquisition of that outlet upon the Adriatic which was a cherished object of Austrian ambition. Were he to concur in Charles' scheme for the conquest of Naples, he would eliminate the most serious risk of opposition to his own scheme of expansion, and it would be difficult to persuade him that his interest did not lie in a compact with the French for the spoliation of Italy. Further, of all the sovereigns of Europe the King of the Romans had the most to fear from the hated Turk, and Charles professed that his Neapolitan expedition was merely the prelude to a crusade. Moreover, Maximilian knew that, if he were to enter the coalition which Ferdinand was trying to organize, he would find himself placed in a relation of friendship and alliance with the upstart usurper of the Duchy of Milan.

In his relations with Ludovic il Moro Maximilian exhibited a curious reluctance to accept the logical consequences of his own policy. Tempted by the offer of a dowry which had seemed almost fabulous to his impecuniosity, he had married Ludovic's niece, and in doing so had promised to Ludovic the eventual possession of the Ducal inheritance. But the Royal diploma which was all that Ludovic had secured, ' did not suffice to give him the right to the exercise with full honours of the Ducal power in Lombardy in the name of the supreme feudal lord ; he needed in addition the material act of investiture, " the investiture and putting in corporal possession of the Duchy, to give effect to the privileges accorded by His Majesty " ; and this is what Maximilian could not bring

himself to do'.[1] Immediately upon Gian Galeazzo's death Ludovic had instructed Maffeo Pirovani to hasten with all speed to the Imperial Court, and there to use his utmost endeavours with the King of the Romans to procure the immediate grant of the investiture, together with the dispatch of some person to give corporal possession of the Duchy, 'for without these two things all that has been done up to the present is of no account'.[2] In a more elaborate instruction which expanded this urgent message Ludovic explained his position. 'To show that the State has not been left without a lord, and at the same time to observe the condition attached to the grant of the privileges, we have assumed the title of lord, and in letters and other documents we write our name "Ludovicus Dux, &c.", without saying of what we are Duke, thus complying with the Royal requirement that the privileges should not be published before the Feast of St. Martin; and this form, as you will tell him, we shall employ until the said Feast, and thereafter we shall entitle ourselves "Dux Mediolani", as provided for by His Majesty. We shall refrain from announcing that we have the privileges until advised by you that His Majesty is agreeable to their publication, as we think that he should be, seeing that the time specified by him is come.'[3] So far from finding His Majesty agreeable, as Ludovic hoped, the ambassador was obliged to report that Maximilian could not be induced to consent to the publication of the privileges, and that by reason of two impediments: first, he did not want to annoy the Electors by letting it be supposed that the grant had been made without their concurrence; and, secondly, he did not want to drive King Alfonso to despair. He professed that he would manage to bring the Electors round in time, when the matter should be carried through with due solemnity. But in reality he resented Ludovic's assumption of the Ducal title, being more than half inclined to regard it as an insult to the Imperial power.

It was thus no easy task which Ferdinand had undertaken when he had set out to harness Maximilian in the same team with Ludovic and the Venetians. With his

[1] Calvi, *Bianca Maria Sforza*, p. 68. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 72–3.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 76–7.

usual adroitness, however, he contrived to rekindle old animosities and to inspire new apprehensions. And, indeed, it would be strange if Maximilian should persist for long in an attitude of friendliness to the French. Louis XI had filched from him a great part of the inheritance which should have come to his first wife, the heiress of Burgundy. Charles had run off unceremoniously with his second bride, the heiress of Brittany, and in the process had jilted his daughter, whom he was solemnly pledged to espouse. In most of the years of the Beaujeu Regency the King of the Romans had been at war with France, and in all those conflicts he had come off the loser. It was easy for Ferdinand to revive these unpleasant memories. He could also recall to his recollection the great part which had once been played by the Emperor in the affairs of Italy, and represent the French King's enterprise as an unwarrantable intrusion into an Imperial preserve. Charles himself had incautiously admitted that he meant to keep Genoa, Pisa, and other places on the ground that they were vital to his communications with Naples; and some of those places were Imperial fiefs. Maximilian was also furious when he heard that Charles had acquired the rights of the Paleologoi and talked of being proclaimed Emperor of the East: there was room in Europe for but one Imperial dignity, and that dignity appertained to the Hapsburg House. Gently fanned by the persistent Ferdinand, these causes of displeasure gradually wrought an entire change in the sentiments of the King of the Romans; and before Charles had set foot in Naples Ferdinand had the satisfaction of seeing Maximilian on intimate terms with the ruler of Milan and in close diplomatic relations with the rulers of Venice. Maximilian offered Venice a treaty of alliance for twenty-five years, requested permission to march through Venetian territories when he should go to be crowned in Rome, and began to talk of his fixed resolve to drive the French from Italy.

By this time, in their disgust at French successes, the Venetian Signory had gone over whole-heartedly to the side of the enemies of France. At first, as we have seen, they had judged Charles' projects from a purely selfish standpoint, thinking that their Republic would do best to stand aside from the turmoil and watch the destructive

antics of a world gone mad. About the time when Charles reached Asti, the Florentine ambassador, Paolantonio Soderini, assured Piero de' Medici that the Venetians were still 'resolved to maintain their neutrality. They think that time will show which is the safest road to follow, and that, if others bear the burden, their State will grow without danger or expense, for others will spend while they save, and the weakness of others will be their strength. They trust no one, certainly not the Pope. If they were to mix themselves up in this war, the other Italian powers, jealous of their strength and eager for its diminution, would desert them, as in the past. They are not satisfied with Maximilian's disposition towards them; nor are they in a position to ignore the incessant menace of the Turk.' [1] The truth was that Charles' enterprise was not at first taken very seriously by the Venetians. They doubted if he would ever come at all; when he came, they thought that he would be held up in the valley of the Po by the combined resistance of Naples and Florence; when he crossed the Apennines, they believed that his progress would be arrested by the strong places of the Florentines; and when he advanced on Rome, they hoped that at so great a distance from his base he must succumb to the attack of an enemy who had recoiled for the final spring. As these optimistic forecasts were successively shattered by Charles' meteoric course, indifference gave way to misgiving, misgiving was succeeded by fear; and Venice began 'to look askance upon the successes of the King of France and upon his presence in Italy'.[2] The Signory liked no better than did Ferdinand the great development of a foreign influence which must prove a serious impediment to their own imperialistic ambitions in the peninsula.

Moreover, the French King's talk of a crusade was disliked at Venice almost as much as his schemes of Italian conquest. For years Venice had endured the costly and destructive enmity of the Turk; she had at last established

[1] Canestrini et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane*, vol. i, pp. 511–12.

[2] The Milanese Ambassador in Venice to Ludovic, 21st January 1495: Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Lettres et négociations de Philippe de Commines*, vol. ii, p. 155.

a *modus vivendi* with the reigning Sultan which was safe, if somewhat inglorious; and she greatly feared a crusading demonstration which might revive the bellicose tendencies of the Orient. So long as Djem was alive and in French hands, Bajazet would be kept in order by the mere threat of an attack which might encourage half his empire to hoist the standard of the Pretender. But this safeguard had now been removed: taken from the seclusion of heated rooms for long winter rides and the rough life of camps, Prince Djem had died of pneumonia three days after Charles had entered his new capital; and whilst the crusading fervour of the French seemed completely to have evaporated amid the delights of Naples, their continued presence in Italy was likely to provoke retaliatory action by the Turk, by which Venice would inevitably be the chief sufferer. In their timorous and selfish attitude towards the French plan for a crusade the Signory of Venice fell short of the reputation which they everywhere enjoyed for sagacious and far-sighted statesmanship. 'The Turks were . . . no imaginary danger. . . . For a century they had been steadily extending their conquests, and more particularly since the fall of Constantinople. They were by this time masters of about the same territory as at present, with the addition of Greece. In the course of the next thirty years they captured Rhodes and nearly dismembered Hungary. Their fleet scoured the Mediterranean. It was not certain that they might not ravage Italy, and even make the Pope fly from Rome.'[1] 'The sudden death of Mohammed II in the flower of his age and at the zenith of his power probably saved Europe from a Mussulman conquest, which had already begun in Italy by the capture of Otranto. The civil war which broke out between the Sultan's two sons, the final defeat of Prince Djem, who had to yield the throne to his elder brother and seek a refuge at Rhodes with the Knights of St. John, did not avail to rouse Christendom from its torpor or again to provoke the great *élan* of faith by which it had once been inspired at the end of the twelfth century. Yet circumstances would have been more favourable than ever before to an attempt to drive the Turks back

[1] J. Gairdner, *Letters and Papers . . . Richard III and Henry VII*, vol. i, p. xliv (1861).

into Asia, had not all common action been rendered impossible by the internal dissensions which tore Europe asunder and by the mutual jealousies of its Governments. The Eastern Question, which, thanks to the fortuitous coincidence of circumstances that could not have been anticipated, might then have been solved, was adjourned indefinitely, leaving to generations unborn a future pregnant with difficulties and dangers.' [1]

Under the empire of the sentiments inspired by French triumphs Venice moved steadily along the path which Ferdinand desired that she should follow. In September 1494 Soderini reported to Piero de' Medici the arrival in Venice of a Spanish courtier, who had come, he said, ostensibly on a pleasure trip, but really as the bearer of secret instructions from the King of Spain. ' I have it on high authority ', he added, ' that the Venetians are about to declare in favour of the King of Naples.' [2] This rumour turned out to be untrue, and in October the Signory had not yet emerged from the stage of annoyance and anxiety. ' Finding that the King of France has come in greater force and is acting with more determination than they expected, the Venetians have changed their view that his operations will be innocuous to them, and now are greatly perturbed.' [3] By November they had reached the point of admitting that their policy of inaction could no longer be maintained, and in that month they approached Ludovic il Moro with a request for counsel and advice. Their anxiety grew no less as they listened glumly week by week to the ever-lengthening tale of French successes. In the midst of the stupefaction caused by the occupation of Rome and the imminent fall of Naples, Ferdinand's envoy, Lorenzo Suarez de Figueroa, appeared amongst them. Reaching Venice on 5th January, he was received in the Senate two days later. He spoke of Ferdinand's concern for the peace of Italy, and of his eagerness to know how the Signory thought that it could best be promoted. The Signory replied that they, too, had been devoting their thoughts and efforts to the cause of peace ; at that moment they were expecting

[1] Thuasne, *Djem-Sultan*, pp. v–vi.
[2] Canestrini et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques*, vol. i, p. 516.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 530.

the arrival of Imperial envoys, who were coming to discuss the needs of Italy; on their arrival, and with the help of the Spanish ambassador in Rome, the Signory felt confident of reaching a decision beneficial to the peninsula.[1]

Figueroa had hoped for something more definite; nor had he long to wait; for the cautious reserve of Venice could not much longer be maintained. When Maximilian and Ludovic showed their hands, and added their voices to Ferdinand's, the Signory at last began to understand that the need for diplomatic finesse had passed away and the time for decisive action had come. In February they told the Spanish ambassador of their firm resolve to work for the expulsion of the French; in March they arrested the Archbishop of Durazzo, who was on his way to raise Albania in the interests of Charles' crusade; measures were at the same time taken to increase the naval and military forces of the Republic; and an impression began generally to prevail that the Republic would soon find itself at war with the King of France.

The reserve of Venice had been due in a large measure to her distrust of Ludovic il Moro and to her realization of the dangers which would be involved in joining any anti-French coalition in which Milan should not be comprised. Ludovic had brought the plague upon Italy, and, though he was now convalescent, it was not certain that he was free from liability to a relapse. Like all Italian rulers, he feared the power and ambition of his rich and aggressive neighbour on the Lagoons, and if the Republic should join with Ferdinand and Maximilian in a league from which he was left out, he would be thrown back into the arms of his French confederate. It was easy to foresee the consequences in that event. Impecunious and inconstant, the King of the Romans was notoriously unreliable; the King of Spain was a long way off and not famous for an unselfish zeal; and if Venice were to ally herself with those sovereigns, she might not improbably find herself exposed unaided to the joint attack of French and Milanese armies. The Signory were therefore loath to commit themselves until assured

[1] A. Segre, 'Lodovico Sforza, detto il Moro, e la Repubblica di Venezia dall' autunno 1494 alla primavera 1495', in *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series III, vol. xx, pp. 41–2.

that Ludovic really intended to enter the coalition, and that Ferdinand and Maximilian were prepared to sanction his admission.

As the weeks passed, and the tale of French successes grew, it became increasingly plain that the attitude of the ruler of Milan was undergoing a radical change. Charles had been but a very short time in Italy when Ludovic began to repent of his share in bringing him thither. A rhyme current in the streets of Milan declared that

> 'The Lord above, the Moor below,
> This warfare's end alone foreknow';[1]

and the sting of it lay in the mock suggestion that there could be any human participation in the monopoly of prescience. Having called in the French through his fear of Naples and Florence, Ludovic saw too late that their establishment in Italy would threaten him with dangers far graver than any to which he stood exposed at the hands of the Medici or the Aragonese. The discovery left him about as happy as a man who, having meant to call in the police to turn poachers out of his coverts, finds that what he has really done is to install a gang of expert burglars in tempting proximity to his strong-room. It was pretty generally believed at the time that Ludovic in his own interest would be vexed to see the French acquire Naples, and that his plan was, as soon as he had got himself made Duke of Milan, to send the French on into Tuscany, then to arrange some compromise by which Alfonso would recognize the suzerainty of the King of France, Florence at the same time being deprived of her possessions in Lunigiana, and afterwards to send the French back across the Alps. Thus with the Florentines despoiled and Alfonso humiliated, he as Duke of Milan would have made himself secure without incurring the danger of a French victory. He thought that winter would hold up the invaders, and the French being naturally impatient, the King short of money, and many of his advisers opposed to the enter-

[1] 'Cristo in cielo et el Moro in terra
Sanno el fine di questa guerra':
Matarazzo, 'Cronaca della Città di Perugia', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. xvi, part ii, p. 32.

prise, some compromise could easily be arranged.[1] As a modern student of Ludovic's policy has expressed it, 'it may be said that at one and the same time il Moro desired and did not desire the presence of the French in the peninsula: he desired it for the purpose of diminishing Alfonso's power; he did not desire it for the purpose of destroying the Aragonese rule in Naples. As a means to the accomplishment of his strange double purpose he thought of the King of the Romans. He hoped, or sought to persuade himself, that it would be possible to prevent Charles VIII, after his coming, from establishing himself securely in the peninsula. The French King, in a word, was to do just as much as suited Ludovic's interests; the moment he thought of acting for his own advantage, he must expect a *volte-face* on the part of the Court of Milan.'[2]

Unfortunately for Ludovic, the French, so far from showing a disposition to confine their actions within the limits which he would have assigned to them, quickly revealed themselves as inconvenient and exacting partners. We have already caught a glimpse of the strained relations which had developed by the month of October 1494—of Ludovic's apprehension when Charles insisted upon visiting Gian Galeazzo, of his annoyance at the King's insulting precautions for his safety whilst a guest in his castles, and of the suspicions engendered in the minds of the French by Gian Galeazzo's death. Before Charles had been a month in Italy an acute observer had reached the conclusion that Ludovic was already beginning to chafe under the arrogance of Charles and his ministers. 'I understand better every day', he wrote,[3] 'that Signor Ludovic has brought down upon himself a great, costly, and oppressive torrent of Frenchmen more insolent, proud, and bestial than any nation I ever saw or heard of, the possible results whereof are terrible and terrifying; of which Frenchmen the number grows daily with the quantity passing the Alps, and I fear lest it may become in the power of the King

[1] Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 51.

[2] A. Segre, 'Lodovico Sforza e la Repubblica di Venezia' in *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series III, vol. xviii, p. 256.

[3] *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series III, vol. xviii, pp. 283–4.

of France to say, when he pleases, *Sic volo, sic jubeo*, and to do precisely what he likes. You would be amazed if I were to tell you of their insolence in turning men out of their houses and ill-using their families without the least respect for anybody. Poor Signor Ludovic is exposed to a crushing expense, and his efforts to raise cash by hook or by crook make him universally detested, every one being reduced to despair, and loathing him and his government by reason of his exactions, by which all are affected, whether they have money or not.'

If this was the position of Ludovic within a month of the coming of the French, he was not likely to feel more at ease when the collapse of Piero de' Medici had revealed something of the extent of his miscalculations, when Charles had refused to make over to him the Genoese places taken from the Florentines, and when he had learnt that his hated rival, Louis of Orleans, the Visconti claimant, was to be left behind in Asti as a standing menace to the security of his throne. At this moment he received a visit from two Venetian ambassadors, Sebastian Badoer and Benedetto Trevisan, who in a secret audience described the consequences of the French invasion, descanted upon the perils by which his State and their own were equally threatened, and asked him for his opinion upon the alarming situation. He told them that the consequences to which they referred had long been foreseen and foretold by himself, but no one had believed him. He admitted that he disliked the French King, despised his councillors, and found that French insolence made them most undesirable neighbours. It was by his advice that they had turned aside against Sarzana, for he had expected that this strong place would arrest their progress, as it would have done if the weakness of the defence had not dashed all his hopes. His one great desire was to rid Italy of the King, and he was doing his best to procure the failure of his enterprise. The Genoese fleet, on which the King greatly relied, had by his orders been disarmed, so that Alfonso, free from anxiety on the side of the sea, could concentrate all his forces on the defence of his land frontiers. The Milanese contingent which had been aiding Montpensier against the Duke of Calabria in Romagna had been recalled, so that the Duke could retire

to southern Italy and join his forces to those of his father. He had encouraged the Pope to persevere in his support of Alfonso, had begged his brother, Ascanio, to be reconciled with His Holiness, and had cautioned him on no account to allow his Colonna companions to continue their hostilities against the Church. He had secretly assured Alfonso that, if he could hold out for only two months, the resources of the French would by then be dissipated. Lastly, he had been in consultation with the King of the Romans, trying to induce him to put a spoke in the French wheel. 'If the Most Christian King decides to march on Rome,' he concluded, 'he should be acquainted with the determination of your Government and mine that the Head of Christendom must not be subjected to the slightest molestation. If he says that he is going as a friend, it is not seemly that one friend should visit another against his will. If he says that he is going with the object of reforming the Church, then that business is none of his; for, to speak quite frankly, he stands in greater need of receiving reformation himself than of undertaking it in others. Think what would be the state of the Church of God, were its reformation to be undertaken by such as he!'[1]

The tone and substance of this pronouncement made it plain that Ludovic had moved far from the position which he had occupied when he had instigated a French descent upon Italy. Before the end of the year, however, the action of the Pope in arresting Ascanio Sforza filled the Duke of Milan with a fury which tended for a time to throw him back upon a French alliance. The Venetians perceived the change when they pressed for the recall of the Count of Caiazzo, the commander of the troops which Charles had raised in Lombardy. Badoer found Ludovic visibly incensed against the Pope. He did what he could to excuse the Papal escapade. He told him that, after all, Ascanio had been set free, and Alexander had apologized, and asked what more he wanted. Did he not understand that the interests of Italy were his own, and that it was high time he changed his policy? 'Magnificent Ambas-

[1] *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series III, vol. xviii, p. 294; Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, vol. v, pp. 53–6; Delaborde, *L'Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*, p. 533.

sador,' replied the Duke, 'I am not going to thank the Pope for liberating my brother, for he has done it, not of his own free will, but under the pressure of necessity. I am, however, obliged to the Signory for their good offices in the matter. My disposition is unchanged. My nature is always to substitute peace and union for discord, as I have often shown in Italy and elsewhere, and from that nature I cannot change. But in these novelties which have come upon us I have never been believed either by the Signory or by others. The Signory is wise, and will know how to find a remedy. For my own part, I am not equal to providing for such matters; and if I alone could really do so, my power would be over-great. . . . As for the Count of Caiazzo, in the first place, he is in the pay of the King of France, and is obliged to go and serve him, when summoned. He has no more than 150 light horse. As for the men-at-arms, the terms of the new investiture of Genoa oblige me to maintain 400 in Italy, France, or elsewhere. But being asked to supply them, I have told my orator to represent that this is not the time to set troops in motion; and in this attitude I shall persevere as long as I can. Suppose that I did recall the Count of Caiazzo; would that rid Italy of this conflagration? What contribution is being made by the Signory or by others? All look to me and say: "If only Ludovic chose." I tell you that I have done enough. It was I who instigated the Florentine business, and I have done the other things you wot of. But I am still obliged to be very careful. Should the King of France win the Kingdom of Naples, and then learn that I alone have shown displeasure at his prosperity, would that be to my advantage? . . . Come to particulars, and tell me what I ought to do. If I can do it without loss of honour and without bringing ruin on my own head, then, as I have always said, I am willing to do it immediately.' [1]

Before long the irritation aroused in the mind of Ludovic by the insult to his brother was swallowed up in a new exasperation with the King of France. After all, as the Venetians had pointed out, the Pope might have been foolish, but he had tried to make amends; he had set the prisoner at liberty, and proffered his apologies. As soon as

[1] *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series III, vol. xx, pp. 37–8.

the departure of the French from Rome left him free to follow his inclinations, Alexander set to work to efface the consequences of his unhappy quarrel with the Sforzas; and in February 1495, under the mediation of Venice, an agreement was concluded between the Pope and the Cardinal which restored to Milan nearly all its former weight in the counsels of the Vatican. Ludovic was much pleased. 'So long as our two States act in union and accord,' he told Badoer, 'we have nothing in the world to fear: on the contrary, the whole world must fear us. We could save King Ferrantino, even though Spain were to join with France against him. But now that Spain is on our side, I care not at all for the King of France, for he can do nothing.' [1]

The new offence of the King of France was his studious neglect of Milanese interests in his treaty with Alexander VI. In that treaty he had looked after the interests of Cardinal della Rovere and of all his Italian supporters, but the name of Ascanio was not so much as mentioned. The incident helped Ludovic to perceive how little he stood to gain, and how much to lose, by a French domination in Italy. Though still hoping that he himself might be able to keep out of it, he had come to realize that definite action must sooner or later be taken. The great thing, he now told Badoer, was to stop Charles' further progress, and the best way to do that would be to press the Spanish sovereigns into war. If they could be induced to attack France from the Pyrenees, Charles would be obliged to leave Italy and go home to defend his own kingdom. It would be proper that the Italian powers should help with money and with men, but it would be better that there should be no fighting in Italy itself, where it would be folly to start another conflagration. For Venice and Milan alone to declare against France would be imprudent, for they would be left with the whole war on their hands; nor would it be wise to bring the Germans into the peninsula, for they would be little better than the French, 'and we should then have two diseases, where we had only one before'.[2]

At this juncture Ludovic received from Charles a letter in which the King expressed his desire to equip a fleet in

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 82. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Genoa, and claimed the use of the Genoese squadron. Knowing the condition of the Royal war chest, Ludovic replied that he might have what he wanted, if he would first send money to defray the cost. 'I have lent him 180,000 ducats or more,' he explained to Badoer, 'which he ought to have repaid in January, and he has repaid nothing. . . . This request for leave to equip ships in Genoa convinces me that he is afraid, and attaches much more weight to the Spanish sovereigns' protest than is indicated in his letters, in which the protest is not mentioned. . . . And, indeed, I myself cannot believe that those sovereigns would have acted thus, unless resolved to follow up words with deeds, should Charles refuse to desist from his enterprise.' [1]

In the opinion of the Signory of Venice, the time had come to extract from the Duke of Milan the definite statement of policy towards the projected coalition for which they were waiting. 'Go to the Duke of Milan,' they instructed Badoer on 20th February,[2] 'and after the usual compliments tell him that, to put an end to present perils, it seems not merely opportune but actually essential to lay the foundations of an alliance between himself, ourselves, the King of the Romans, and the King of Spain under the guidance of the Pope; this is for the preservation of our respective States and for the peace of Italy. . . . We need not enumerate the advantages likely to accrue from such a league. We are convinced that the Pope will willingly adhere. The Imperial ambassadors, lately arrived, have come well disposed to its conclusion. Thus, in order the better to regulate our conduct and promote the common weal, we await the opinion of His Excellency, whom you will sound. You will beg His Excellency to regard our communication as extremely confidential, and we on our part shall so regard his reply.'

'We thank God,' the Signory wrote again to Badoer on 25th February,[3] 'that the way is pointed out in which to restore to the peninsula the longed-for quietness and peace. After their general declaration the ambassadors of the King of the Romans said that their special mission was confined to the negotiation of an alliance with our Empire. But we

[1] *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series III, vol. xx, pp. 82–3.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 95–6.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 96–7.

showed by incontrovertible reasoning that in the peculiar condition of Italy it was essential that the league should be joined by other powers, to wit, the Pope, Spain, and the illustrious Duke of Milan. . . . Recommend to the Duke that he on his part further with the Pope and the King of the Romans the work which we have thus begun. Of the excellent intentions of Spain we have no doubt at all since the Catholic King's dispatch of his armada to Italian waters. Contrive that the Duke's ambassadors accredited to ourselves be furnished with full powers to conclude a league, for in an opportune moment that conclusion will present no difficulty.'

Two days later came tidings which left no doubt that the opportune moment was at hand. News of the fall of Naples reached Ludovic on 27th February. He sent immediately for Badoer. 'Magnificent Ambassador,' he said to him, 'we have bad news: Naples has fallen. . . . But we must not on that account lose heart: rather must we work with a yet more eager solicitude for the welfare of Italy.' [1]

Thus the stage was set at last for Ferdinand's diplomatic tragi-comedy, and the time has come when we must go back to Commynes in Venice. The position in which that unhappy diplomat found himself was unenviable. Immersed in light-hearted enjoyment of his conquest, the sovereign whom he represented ignored his existence: his letters were unanswered, his warnings passed unheeded, and he received neither instructions for his own guidance in a time of acute anxiety, nor information with which to appease the pride and fear of the Government to which he was accredited. In its resentment at an insulting neglect and in its eagerness to rid itself of an inconvenient surveillance, that Government began in January to give Commynes reasonably plain hints that his presence in Venice was no longer acceptable. A distinguished Venetian, known to enjoy the confidence of the Signory, advised him to go away of his own accord, alleging that his presence with his King would further the cause of peace more effectually than his continued residence in Venice. Commynes did not know, said the Milanese ambassador to his master,

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 106–7.

whether this was an expression of personal opinion or a semi-official hint from the Signory ' to induce him to go away, so that they might have a free hand to concoct something with the ambassadors of the King of the Romans, who are expected, and with the envoy of the King of Spain, who is here. I know that the Most Christian Majesty has written only once or twice to Commynes since he came here ; he has more than once told me so himself, complaining of the King's Government ; in the interests of the expedition its progress ought to be reported daily to the Signory through Commynes, who would not then appear to be without a mission, and they ought to know the importance of keeping the Signory *au courant*. On several occasions the people here have told him that they could not see the object of his visit to Venice, since he never made any communication to them, nor held any with his own sovereign. . . . Commynes supposes that this language comes of the uselessness of his residence here, the King, his master, never employing him as the channel of communication with the Signory ; still less does he make use for that purpose of the Venetian ambassadors accredited to himself, to whom he has scarcely spoken a word since their arrival. This is much against his own interests, says Commynes, who lays the blame on his Government, adding that, if the King only realized how troublesome the Signory could make themselves, he would treat them with greater consideration. I told him that he was certainly right, and ought to warn the King and his Government. He replied that he had written urgent letters, but had got no reply ; that he had sent couriers post-haste, but had received no news nor any information whatever about the progress of the expedition ; and that he would write no more, as his advice was taken in ill part. . . . He concluded by saying that, if the King's efforts should culminate in a happy and prosperous issue, the credit would be due to Providence rather than to the skill of the Government.' [1]

Having failed in their attempt to get rid of him, the Venetian Government next sought to allay the suspicions of Charles' representative. He might perhaps have noticed,

[1] Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Lettres et négociations de Philippe de Commines*, vol. ii, pp. 152–3.

they said, that there was a certain liveliness in diplomatic circles on the Lagoons: they wished him to know that it arose from their endeavours to concert with other powers a scheme of defence against the Turks. But the days of crusading enthusiasm were long over, and Commynes was not such a simpleton as to believe that the Turkish peril formed the true motive for the negotiations which he knew to be in progress, or accounted for the presence of so many diplomatic agents in the antechambers of the Signory. Something he managed to learn by judicious bribery, and something by a critical observation of men and events. He observed the feverish activities of the Aragonese envoys, the haughtiness of the Spanish ambassador, the altered attitude of the representatives of Milan, the secretiveness of the Signory. Ludovic's envoys overdid their part, for whilst the Venetians frankly admitted that they disliked Charles' policy, the Milanese came to Commynes with exaggerated manifestations of delight in French successes. Before long Commynes obtained positive proof of their duplicity. They came to him and inquired blandly whether he could tell them on what business the embassies of the King of the Romans and the King of Spain had come to Venice; and he happened to know both that the Spaniards had passed through Milan in disguise, and that the Germans were acting at Ludovic's instigation. Had nothing else excited suspicion, the way in which the Signory and their visitors conducted their business would in itself have aroused distrust. 'They began to communicate with each other secretly and by night, and at the first by their secretaries, for they durst not as yet declare publicly against the King, especially the Duke of Milan and the Venetians, being still uncertain whether or no the projected league would be concluded.' [1]

Despite all precautions Commynes became aware that some plot was being hatched, and despite protestations of the most unblushing inexactitude he guessed shrewdly at its nature. When matters had reached a point at which an official protest seemed to be called for, he appeared unbidden before the Senate. He reminded them of their ancient friendship for his country, and contrasted it with

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, pp. 216–17.

what he knew of their present disposition and their recent activities. He was told by the Doge in reply that he must not believe all that he might hear in a place teeming with idle political gossip; he had spoken of a league against his King; they wanted no such thing, and had never heard it so much as suggested; that for which they were really working was an alliance between France and the other powers for concerted action against the Turk; and as a means to that end they had been devising proposals for the settlement of the Neapolitan difficulty.

Never a friend to the King's policy, and now become more than ever distrustful of it from an observation of its international results, Commynes would have welcomed any genuine effort to effect a compromise, if the matter had rested with himself; but he could not venture to act without authority, and all that he could do was to ask for time to refer to his master and obtain fresh instructions. Before leaving, he begged that the Signory, if they had anything to complain of, would formulate their grievances. He was answered promptly. The King, they complained, had told every one, themselves included, that his sole object in coming to Italy was to take Naples and then to move against the Turk; what he had actually done was to occupy Papal and Florentine places, notably Pisa; it looked as though his real purpose was to take all that he could lay his hands on in Italy without lifting a finger against the common enemy of Christendom; and in Asti, too, the Duke of Orleans was giving open utterance to menaces which caused the liveliest anxiety to the Duke of Milan.

Their practices being discovered, the conspirators threw off pretence, and began to meet daily in conclave, awaiting the hoped-for tidings of that first check to French progress which was to cement the alliance and furnish the signal for intervention. But the French reverse was long in coming to pass, and instead bad news came in apace: San Germano occupied, Capua surrendered, Naples entered, the castles captured, the whole kingdom in French hands. When the news of the final collapse of the Aragonese power reached their city, the Signory sent for Commynes. He 'found them assembled in great numbers, somewhere about fifty or sixty, in the room of the Doge, who was sick of a colic.

He told me the news with an affectation of joy, but none of the others could dissemble as he did. Some sat on footstools, their heads bowed in their hands; others were in different postures; and all showed symptoms of being sick at heart. I doubt if the Roman Senators were more amazed or taken aback when the news of Hannibal's victory at Cannae reached their city. Not a single Venetian seemed to see me; saving the Doge, not one addressed me; and I was amazed to behold them. The Doge asked if the King would abide by his promises, which I had always confirmed. I assured him earnestly that he would, did my best in the interests of peace, and offered to serve therein to the best of my ability, hoping to allay their mistrust; and then took my leave.' [1]

As the Venetians and their friends began to throw off the dejection that had overwhelmed them at the first shock of the Aragonese *débâcle*, it was seen that the ultimate result of the Neapolitan disaster would be to quicken the slow foot of diplomacy. By common consent in face of the common peril the difficulties which were hindering the negotiations were swept aside, and Ludovic, while ringing joy bells in affected delight at the triumph of his ally, sent urgent instructions to Venice that everything should be conceded to expedite the completion of the league. Thereupon, late in the evening of 31st March, the league was hastily concluded. The next morning Commynes was again summoned to an audience of the Signory, when a scene was enacted very different from that of which he had lately been an interested and gratified spectator. He describes it in these words. 'The league was concluded late one night. The next morning the Signory sent for me earlier than usual. After I had entered and taken my seat, the Doge informed me that in honour of the Holy Trinity they had concluded a league between our Holy Father, the Pope, the King of the Romans, the King of Castille, the Duke of Milan, and themselves with three objects: first, the defence of Christendom against the Turk; secondly, the defence of Italy; thirdly, the preservation of their States: and I was to communicate it to the King. They were assembled in great numbers, a hundred

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 222.

or more; they held their heads high and were in great spirits, and their expressions were very different from those which I had beheld when they had told me of the taking of the castle at Naples. They told me, further, that they had written to recall their ambassadors who were with the King. . . . I was sick at heart and very anxious for the safety of the King and all his company, believing, as they did themselves, that matters were more advanced than they were. I feared that they might have the Germans ready; and in that case the King could never have got out of Italy. I made up my mind that in this predicament I would not talk too much; but they set to work to draw me out. I told them that already on the previous evening and on several other occasions I had advised the King of what was going on, and that, as he told me in reply, he had heard of it also from other sources. At this they made wry faces, for there is no people so suspicious or secretive—indeed, they often give themselves away by their own craftiness—and this was why I told them. I added that I had also written to Messieurs d'Orléans and Bourbon, so that they might look to Asti: this I said, hoping to delay their advance upon Asti, which could not possibly have been saved, had they been as well prepared as they pretended and believed; for the place was ill equipped, and so for long remained.

'They proceeded to tell me that the business was not aimed against the King, but was designed for protection from him; and they said that they could not tolerate the deception he practised upon every one, saying he wanted nothing but Naples and a crusade, and then acting in a manner quite contrary, trying to destroy the Duke of Milan and the Florentines and to seize estates of the Church. I answered to this that the Kings of France had augmented the Church and increased and defended her, and that the present King was more likely to do the same than to take anything from her; that their alleged motives were not those by which in fact they were actuated; that they wished to trouble Italy for their own profit; and that they seemed quite likely to succeed. They took that a little ill, as I was told; but I spoke the truth, as is shown by the places they have gained in Apulia as a reward for helping

King Ferrand against us. When I rose to withdraw, they made me be seated again, and the Doge asked me if I were not desirous of making some overture of peace, seeing that I had spoken in that sense on the previous day. That, however, had been upon the condition that they should postpone the conclusion of their league for a fortnight, so that I might send to the King and have his answer. These things said, I withdrew to my lodging. They sent for the ambassadors one after the other; and when their council dispersed, I met the Neapolitan in a new robe and in high glee; and there was reason for it, for this was great news for him.' [1]

'On the first of April,' was the account which a Venetian chronicler [2] gave of the matter, 'the Doge summoned the ambassador of France, and informed him that on the previous day a league and good understanding had been concluded . . . and would be published on the ensuing Palm Sunday. The ambassador was astonished: never, he said, had the Signory broken faith with any one; how could they have betrayed his King? Upon the Doge replying that peace with his King was more than ever desired, he asked: "Then why was the league made?" He was told that it was from a desire to avoid molestation. The Frenchman retorted: "The result is to close my King's road home." To which the Doge responded: "Far from that. Every one will give him free passage; the Signory will be the first to offer it, together with victuals in their territories; and if he does not care to risk the journey by land, we will offer for his service fifteen, twenty, or even thirty-five galleys." Directly the ambassador left the Palace, orders were given that joy bells should be rung throughout the Venetian territory; and for three days the rejoicings were kept up with illuminations in the customary manner.'

The League of Venice was an alliance, designed to endure for twenty-five years, between the Pope, the King of the Romans, the Catholic Sovereigns, the Republic of Venice, and the Duke of Milan. Its professed objects were the

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, pp. 224–7.

[2] Malipiero, 'Annali Veneti', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. vii, p. 334.

maintenance of peace in Italy, the promotion of the welfare of Christendom, the upholding of the honour of the Holy See and of the rights of the Empire, and the reciprocal protection of the contracting parties against the aggression of other powers. Each of its members, other than the Pope, was to furnish 8,000 horse and 4,000 foot; the Pope was asked for a military contribution of only one-half the stipulated strength; but he undertook in addition to employ his spiritual powers in aid of the objects of the League. Each contracting party undertook to make no separate peace, and not to make any new alliances in Italy without the consent of the whole League. Liberty was reserved for other powers to join at a later date. Ostensibly for mutual protection, the League was universally believed to contain secret clauses of a less innocent kind: Spain, as was supposed, promised that her forces in Sicily should co-operate in the recovery of Naples; the Venetians would attack the maritime places in French occupation, and prevent the transport of French reinforcements by sea; and Maximilian and Ferdinand, with financial assistance from their confederates, would launch attacks upon the Kingdom of France itself. The correctness of these suspicions seemed to be proved by the conduct of the confederates, who began openly to engage troops, to mobilize fleets, and generally to prepare for war. As we have seen, the one motive common to the contracting parties was the desire to check the menacing torrent of French successes, and to rid Italy of the presence of invaders who were on the way to the acquisition of an excessive power. From that point of view it may be said that 'the treaty has an immense importance, and that rather in the sphere of thought than in the realm of action, for it substituted the equilibrium of Europe for that of Italy, thus attesting the political end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times'.[1]

Commynes, who well understood the significance of the League, and saw all around him the ominous evidences of martial preparation, hastened to put Orleans on his guard, to press upon the Government at home the need for instant succour for Asti, and to bring home to the thought-

[1] Cipolla, *Storia delle Signorie italiane dal 1313 al 1530*, vol. ii, p. 720.

less Government in Naples the necessity for an immediate retreat, before their homeward path should be barred by a gathering host of enemies. Venice and Milan, he told the King, were diligently enrolling troops, organizing regiments of light horse and infantry, and providing financial resources. Men-at-arms had been ordered to Ravenna; money and men had been sent to Rome; and money was also being found for the King of the Romans. It was rumoured that Maximilian was coming to Italy, and one of the ambassadors had declared that, if only he could get money, it would soon be seen whether he or the King of France would have the best of it. 'Both your armies are fine ones,' the dispatch added, 'and it would be a perilous business. Therefore I speak with frankness, so that you may consider the matter before the crisis arises. I am convinced that he will come, and if you could reach an agreement with him, you would be doing a stroke of business.' In well-informed quarters it was thought that such an agreement could easily be reached, provided that Charles kept nothing belonging to the Empire or the Church. Orders had been given for the mobilization of the Venetian fleet, and work upon the unfinished galleys was being pressed forward. Eventually they would have fifty vessels, but not, perhaps, until another three weeks had elapsed. Travellers from Germany reported that troops were gathering along the line of Maximilian's advance. The League was to be solemnly ratified on Sunday with Palm Sunday processions.[1]

In May Commynes had a final audience of the Signory, in the company of Jean Bourdin, one of the King's Secretaries, when he made a last desperate attempt to procure a reversal of Venetian policy. The ambassador began by pointing out the grounds upon which his master might justly complain of the conduct of the Signory. Deterred by his friendship for Venice—a friendship which he had been labouring to strengthen—Charles had refused pressing invitations to form alliances with other powers. Venice, on the other hand, had entered a League which had been formed without any notice to him, and about which he had been kept entirely in the dark. Of his own acts and plans he had throughout kept the Signory informed. After he

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. Mlle Dupont, vol. iii, pp. 408–17.

had traversed all Italy, was there a single place which could justly complain of violence or damage? Not, certainly, Montferrat or Milan. At Lucca the people had placed one of their strong places at his disposal, and he had restored it promptly. The Florentine and Papal places had likewise been given back, or were in process of restitution. He now meant to return to France without demanding either subsidies or guarantees. He could not believe that any one would offer opposition. His objects were the preservation of peace and the promotion of common action against the Turk.

The Doge answered that the League was not directed against the King, but was designed to preserve Venice and the peace of Italy. France had made similar alliances without informing Venice, and each power must necessarily have its friends and its foes. The Republic wanted only peace and the undisturbed possession of that which belonged to it; and to this they were prepared to devote their lives and substance, just as the French would themselves defend Naples or France itself. If the treaties with Florence and the Pope were observed, and their places restored, Venice would do nothing to disquiet the King; and, League or no League, she could never be brought to adopt a policy of aggression. She would welcome peace and joint action against the Turk, against whom she had stood up through eighteen years of incessant warfare, until forced in her own despite to abandon the conflict. In view of the musterings of troops in Naples and Asti she was bound to take steps to ensure her own safety; but if the King would restore what he had taken, she would gladly see him pass safely upon his return; nor did she believe that in that case the League would wish to hinder his departure. On this point the Doge would consult the ambassadors of the League, and give a definite reply. It was the warlike attitude of Milan, answered Commynes, which had necessitated the summoning of troops from France, for the Milanese were threatening to prevent the King's passage, in whatever strength he might come. There was no occasion for any consultation with ambassadors, since the King meant to pass without attacking any one, and would know how to protect his men. The object

of his visit was to learn from the Doge whether his master had anything to apprehend from Venice upon his passage, a passage which in any event he was irrevocably determined to make.

In a postscript to his dispatch Commynes informed the King of the upshot of his efforts. The Signory, he wrote, have 'conferred with the ambassadors of the League; they all think that you have no intention of making the restitutions, for by recent letters they learn that you have threatened the Pope with another occupation of Rome, and this compels them to do all they can, not in aggression, but for self-defence. You ought, they said, to pass with a small company, and the Duke of Milan and the Venetians themselves would give hostages for your safety. I replied immediately that you would not entrust your person to the Duke of Milan, not even if he were to hand over his wife, his children, and all his relatives to the fourth generation. They then asked: "But supposing we give you ours?" To this we replied that there were things which might happen upon the journey which would make their hostages of no avail; should you trust to them, you might fall into the hands of the Duke of Milan; you might even—though God forbid it—be killed or captured: could the Signory bring you to life again or free you from a Milanese dungeon? Their own experience must tell them that there was no one upon whose good faith you could rely. Nor was there any reason why you should do so, for you would pass how you pleased, and would see who would dare to say you nay.

'Some then said that they would offer you ships to carry you to Leghorn and escort you thence to Marseilles. Our instructions, we said, did not cover this point. We wanted merely to learn their intentions, lest mutual mistrust should provoke hostilities. You would choose the land route, we thought, not entering walled towns, but resting in your tents in the open country; and only if victuals should not be brought to you would you be constrained to take and pay for what you required.

'The change which has come over the attitude of the Signory between Sunday and Tuesday is caused by the action of the Government in Milan, which has incited the

Pope to change his mind, which breathes fire and slaughter against you, and which is constantly egging on the Venetians. But, as we told the latter this morning, and as is the fact, they will be obliged, if they oppose you, to do it single-handed, for Signor Ludovic has his hands full already, and will find them getting fuller, as time goes on. In our opinion, this campaign of threat and intimidation is designed to frighten you, whereas really, if you refrain from entering Rome forcibly and content yourself with following your own road, not a man will have a word to say.' [1]

To encourage his sovereign in the predicament in which he found himself, Commynes affected a cheerfulness which he did not feel. The one hopeful feature was the appearance of symptoms which indicated the development in the League of the malady, common to alliances, of divergent purposes and discordant aims. Whilst Maximilian and Ludovic were for a forward policy and urged vigorous action against the French, the attitude of Venice remained unchanged, and her watchwords were still safety first and economy next. The great object of the Signory was to get Charles out of Italy, and they thought that he should be assisted, not hindered, if he should show any disposition to go of his own accord. To imperil the King's person by barring his way would serve no useful purpose, and would be certain to draw down upon their heads the utmost effort of the great kingdom which acknowledged his authority. Ludovic, on the other hand, encouraged by Maximilian, was bent upon the capture of Asti, which would shut the French in a trap. He could not reconcile himself to the presence in Asti of the Duke of Orleans, his enemy and rival; he trembled to see him in command of a force which was daily becoming stronger by reinforcement from home; and he dreaded lest that force should take the army of the League in flank or rear, when the time should come for it to march against the French King. On the other hand, if Asti could be occupied at once, the fate of Charles and his companions would be sealed.

On 6th April Ludovic appointed Galeazzo di San Severino to the command of a Milanese contingent of

[1] Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Lettres et négociations de Philippe de Commines*, vol. ii, pp. 192–9.

3,000 horse and 4,000 foot, and instructed him to march against Asti. At the same time he sent one of his secretaries to present an ultimatum to the Duke of Orleans: by reason of the Duke's hostile attitude, and to provide for the safety of his own dominions, he was constrained to occupy Asti; and, further, having received from the King of the Romans the investiture of Milan, he must require that Louis of Orleans should address him by the proper Ducal title, and himself give up the use of it. Thanks to the warnings which Commynes had sent to the Regent of France, to the Regent's response in hurrying troops across from Dauphiné, and to the energy and courage which Orleans himself rarely failed to exhibit in moments of crisis, Asti was not in so defenceless a condition as the enemy had hoped and believed; and what was lacking in material strength would, so far as human pluck could achieve it, be supplied by the courage and resolution of the defence. 'I have just received a packet of letters from M. d'Argenton in Venice', wrote Orleans to the Duke of Bourbon on 14th April; 'they show plainly the situation of the King's affairs in Italy; and, by God, cousin, it calls for your diligent attention. Especially must you send me men with whom I may hold the passes, to keep open the way for reinforcements and to save His Majesty's person. To that will I unreservedly devote myself and all that I have.'[1] On Good Friday the Milanese ultimatum reached Asti, and throughout the Easter season Orleans was sending off to Bourbon reiterated appeals of increasing vehemence. 'Help me to keep open the passages,' he adjured him; 'you will realize the danger, should we fail. I am assured that the King of the Romans is at Trent with 30,000 men, whom the Italians are paying. The enemy advance-guard is within three miles of us, and by Monday or Tuesday we shall be besieged. Engage two or three thousand Swiss, and if you want money to pay them, sell my lands and goods and chattels, and your own too. If we help him not here, the King will be in the most dire peril.'[2]

Had the Milanese marched against Asti on that Easter

[1] Kervyn de Lettenhove, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–90.

[2] R. de Maulde-la-Clavière, *Histoire de Louis XII*, First Part, vol. iii, pp. 157–60.

Tuesday, there would have been nothing for Louis of Orleans to do, as his biographer has remarked, but to sell his life as dearly as possible upon the ruins of his thinly garrisoned walls. Ludovic, however, was hampered by his own want of money and by the Venetian lack of enthusiasm ; San Severino's contingent was good enough for a demonstration, but inadequate for an assault or siege ; and with every week that passed, the attack upon Asti was made more hazardous by the constant stream of reinforcements which flowed through the Alpine passes. At Easter Orleans could not muster more than 2,000 men. By June he was in command of six companies of men-at-arms, of 2,500 archers, and of a body of Swiss, besides considerable numbers of men whom he had recruited locally. He was now in sufficient force to feel no further anxiety about Asti and the passes, and he began to consider the possibility of offensive action.

Not far from Asti, on the border of Ludovic's dominions, lay the town of Novara, and it was a matter of common knowledge that for years past a profound disaffection for the Ducal Government had permeated the people of this rich and important city. Both as an industrial and as an agricultural centre, Novara was peculiarly dependent upon the rivers which watered its territory, for those rivers provided power for its suburban industries, and made possible the elaborate system of irrigation which gave fertility to its fields. In his private estates not far away, Ludovic, with his intelligent interest in the economic welfare of his Duchy, had set out to show for the instruction of his subjects what irrigation and scientific farming could accomplish, even under adverse conditions ; and the conversion of the arid wastes around Vigevano into verdant pastures and glistening cornfields was one of the wonders of the day. But whilst the end which Ludovic sought was admirable, the same praise could not be allowed to the means by which that end had been achieved. The canal which brought wealth to Vigevano threatened ruin to Novara, and the feelings of bitterness engendered in the Novarese by the diversion of their water-supply were intensified by arbitrary seizures of private estates, by spoliatory legislation under the cloak of public utility, and by judicial confiscations

upon trumped-up charges of crime. Amongst the victims of this oppression were members of the families of Caccia and Tornielli, who by their rank, wealth, and connexions enjoyed a great position among their fellow citizens in Novara; and the strongest local influence might thus be secured in support of any movement which should aim at bringing Novarese disaffection to a head.

A scheme for setting such a movement on foot was devised at the Court of Savoy, and negotiations between the Count of Bresse and the party led by the Caccia and Tornielli families resulted in an invitation to the Duke of Orleans to come and take possession of the city. Marching rapidly and unobserved through the territories of Montferrat and Savoy, the French contingent dispatched on this service succeeded in approaching Novara without attracting the attention of Ludovic's troops, and at dawn on 10th June it presented itself before the gates. As the news got about, the sleeping city began to bestir itself, and the flustered functionary who was responsible for its safety hurriedly convened a council, from which to seek advice in the emergency that had come upon him. Meeting one of the Caccia conspirators as he hastened through the streets, and not knowing him for the traitor he was, he shouted to him that the French were at the gates. 'There is no need to worry; they will not stay there long', was the answer of the conspirator, who was on his way to let them in. Three days later Orleans himself entered Novara at the head of 3,000 horse and 4,000 foot;[1] and with the surrender of the citadel on the 14th the entire city passed into French hands.

The *coup de main* against Novara was a blunder, and a blunder of which the consequences were serious, and might have been fatal. The Duke of Orleans had done

[1] 'L'entrée dura plus de quatre heures,' wrote one of the gentlemen who accompanied the Duke. 'Tous ceulx de la ville estoient joyeux à merveilles, qui tous portoient la croix blanche et crioient: "Orléans, Orléans; France, France", et joignoient les mains; je ne veiz jamais gens faire si grant chière qu'ilz faisoient et font de présent. . . . Si Monsieur ne feust venu icy, ceulx de ceste dite ville devoient payer quarante mille ducatz. Le commissaire du seigneur Ludovic estoit icy pour les recouvrer': La Pilorgerie, *Campagne et Bulletins de la Grande Armée d'Italie commandée par Charles VIII*, pp. 311–13.

either too much or too little. It was possible—nay more, it was probable, so widespread was the disaffection engendered by Ludovic's prolonged fiscal oppression—that, if the rival claimant had advanced boldly into the heart of the Milanese, his presence would have given the signal for rebellion, and that the people of the capital itself would have thrown open their gates, as the Novarese had thrown open theirs.[1] In that event the cautious and nervous Signory of Venice would assuredly have hastened to come to terms with the French, thereby paralysing Maximilian and leaving the Pope in impotent isolation; and the offensive power of the League would have been strangled at birth. But by inflicting a scratch when he might have struck to kill, Orleans had done no more than arouse irritation and alarm, and nothing could have been better calculated to stimulate the enemy to activity than an act of aggression which seemed to justify the worst that had ever been said about the devouring ambition of the French. Until the attack upon Novara the Venetians had shown no disposition to attempt interference with the King's retreat from Naples. In the indignation aroused by that attack they decided that they could no longer hold aloof while so dangerous an enemy marched unmolested away. Nor was it only in its effect upon the League that Orleans' ill-judged action had added to the peril of the King's position. Promptly besieged in Novara along with the force of eight or ten thousand men whom he had thrown into the place, he had immobilized an army of which the paramount duty was to keep open a line of retreat for the King, and by the intervention of which at a critical juncture it might alone be possible to save the Royal army from capture or annihilation. Charles was approaching, and the day was at hand when he and his little band of brothers must fight their way through the gathering hosts of their foes.

[1] Maximilian advised Ludovic to take precautions 'per il suspecto chel ha che Milano debia fare novita': Calvi, *Bianca Maria Sforza*, p. 120; and cf. p. 121.

NOTE.—The origin of syphilis in Europe has been debated during four centuries, and even now it cannot be said that the question is definitely settled. At the time of Charles VIII's invasion of Italy that disease suddenly broke out with extraordinary violence. Whence had it been introduced? Was it, as some suppose, brought back by Columbus' sailors from the West Indies? Or did it reach Italy from Africa or the East? Did Charles' army take it to Italy? Or did they contract it when they got there?

In Mr. Jonathan Hutchinson's General Introduction to Sir D'Arcy Power's *A System of Syphilis* (Oxford Medical Publications, 1908, vol. i, p. xxiv, and cf. p. 4) we read: 'It is generally accepted that syphilis was brought into Europe from the West Indies. . . . To some of us who have for long insisted that no other conclusion was possible it is satisfactory to have the support of an authority such as Iwan Bloch. "All available statements and facts point to the last decade of the fifteenth century—particularly the years 1493–1500—as the time when syphilis first appeared in the Old World. There is not a particle of evidence to show that the disease existed in Europe before that time." Dr. Bloch's theory (p. 13) is that the disease was introduced into Barcelona by Columbus' sailors upon their return from his first voyage in 1493; that Charles VIII engaged Spanish mercenaries to go to Italy; that these mercenaries carried the infection with them to the French camps; and that Charles' troops spread it through Italy. He adds that, had it not been an entirely new disease, it could not have attained the extraordinary violence which characterized its outbreak at that time.

In the summary statement contained in Sir D'Arcy Power's book Dr. Bloch cites no authority for the statement that Charles VIII engaged Spanish mercenaries. In the absence of such authority it may be permissible to doubt whether Ferdinand of Aragon would have permitted any extensive recruiting campaign in the interests of a power which he disliked and feared. No doubt there may have been a casual enlistment of adventurers from Barcelona and its neighbourhood; and it is undoubted that Charles took with him to Italy considerable bodies of troops recruited in the southern provinces of France, to which the infection from Barcelona might possibly by then have been carried. But supposing that this were so, it becomes difficult to reconcile the fact with the extraordinary rapidity of the spread of infection upon which Dr. Bloch lays stress. Charles began to prepare for his expedition in the autumn of 1493, and troops were being collected at Lyons and in Provence for months before the army finally marched in the late summer of 1494. Another six months elapsed before the army reached Naples. Throughout its march it was accompanied by numerous prostitutes. In the circumstances it seems necessary to conclude that, if a violently infectious disorder had been brought to the French camps from Barcelona, it must have become rampant throughout the army long before that

army reached Naples. It has been suggested that the malady to which Charles succumbed at Asti in September 1494 may have been syphilis, but this is mere conjecture: Charles himself believed it to be small-pox, and his doctors, whatever the limitations of their knowledge, can scarcely have confounded the old and familiar scourge of society with the novel malady which was to startle and terrify Europe. Apart from this illness of the King's, there is nothing, to my knowledge, to suggest the presence of syphilis in the French ranks before they reached Naples. They themselves were sure that it was in Naples that they had contracted the disease, and 'le mal de Naples' was the name they gave it. It was a disease, said one of them, which had never been heard of in France, and which was then called *la maladie de Naples*, because they brought it back from that country. 'Whilst the French were at Naples', said a writer in the following century, 'there appeared a contagion and malady so dangerous that the cleverest doctors were at a loss what to call it. . . . The Italians have called it *il mal francese*, and our people *le mal de Naples*' (Belleforest, *L'Histoire des Neuf Roys Charles de France* (1568), pp. 416–17; and cf. the same author's *Grandes Annales*, vol. ii, fos. 331–2, and Beaucaire de Péguillon's *Rerum Gallicarum Commentarii*, p. 189, where he devotes a paragraph to the question of the 'morbi venerei seu Neapolitani origo'). Even Sanuto, who takes a patriotic delight in chronicling the misdeeds of the French, acquits them on this particular charge. 'This disease,' he says (*I Diarii*, vol. i, p. 234), 'though said by many to have come from the French, yet was contracted by them also about two years ago, and they call it *mal italiano*.'

Assuming that the disease was brought to Barcelona by Columbus' crews in 1493, is it not likely that by 1495 it may have reached Naples otherwise than through the instrumentality of Charles' troops? Barcelona and Naples are seaports, separated by an inconsiderable distance and by no great obstacles to navigation; it was not long since both had been under the same Crown; both were still ruled by members of the same Royal House; and the master of Barcelona was still the owner of Sicily and Sardinia. The political and commercial ties which bound together the Aragonese kingdoms in Spain and Italy would naturally have resulted in an intercourse close enough to account for the prevalence in Naples in 1495 of a virulently infectious disease introduced into Barcelona in 1493; and I hesitate to believe that the introduction of syphilis into Italy can justly be included among the misfortunes which the French brought upon that unhappy country. There is the authority of an eminent Italian scholar for the proposition that that disease was raging in Italy two years before the coming of Charles (Cipolla, *Storia delle Signorie Italiane*, vol. ii). He adds that a monument was erected in the church of S. Maria del Popolo in Rome to a youth who died of it in 1485.

XIV

FORNOVO

On 5th April the Venetian ambassadors waited upon the French King in Naples, and broke to him the news of the conclusion of the League. He took the tidings very ill. 'The Signory has done me a great wrong,' he said; 'never would I have believed it, because of our alliance.' The ambassadors protesting that it was done for the protection of the confederate States against the Turk, the King burst out: 'What? Have not I too a State in Italy? Tell the Signory that, when they intend to make a League, they should give me notice, and not send to inform me when it is the common talk of the whole country-side. It is a great shame! I have always conferred with you about everything, but henceforth, since the Signory acts as it does, I shall tell you nothing. And the Signory cannot make the Flanders voyage without my leave! The Signory has made a League, forsooth, because the Turks have built a fleet! Why, truly, how terrifying the Turks are! I see them coming!'[1]

When the same news had been told to Commynes in Venice, his first thought had been for the King's safety, and his first fear lest the King's road home might be closed. It was characteristic of Charles that he himself should receive the intelligence not so much with alarm as with annoyance, and that he should applaud the comedies played before the Court, in which Gallic wit loosed its shafts at the contracting powers, as though the hostile coalition of one-half of Europe was a matter to be treated with derision. A little reflection, however, began presently to chasten this careless mood, and to suggest the wisdom of a speedy departure before the enemy States should have time to marshal their forces. Charles had been eager to set out homewards before the League had been made,[2] but in the

[1] Sanuto, *La Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, pp. 294–5.

[2] 'Era incredibile l'ardore che il Re e tutta la Corte avevano di ritornarsene in Francia: come se il caso che era stato bastante a fare acquistare tanta vittoria fusse bastante a farla conservare': Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 117; and see Briçonnet's letter quoted above, p. 176.

changed posture of affairs after its conclusion it was easier to talk of a retreat than to devise a means whereby it might be conducted with safety. The possibility of a great hostile coalition had not been taken into account by the improvident authors of the Italian adventure, and their military measures were wholly inadequate to the sudden demands of that unforeseen emergency. Had Charles immediately embarked upon the fleet which lay at Naples, and set his sails to the first favouring breeze before the fleets of Venice could leave the Adriatic or the Spanish vessels come out from the harbours of Sicily, there would have been a chance that he might have made his way in safety to Marseilles; but the fate which later befell the French ships, when they encountered the Genoese squadron on their homeward way, showed that even this hurried flight would not have been without its hazard; and after the initial opportunity of escape had been allowed to slip by, the sea route could not be thought of in face of the hostility of Spain and Venice and the desertion of Genoa. The situation on land was not much more reassuring. The army in Naples must be divided, but it was not large, and it was impossible so to divide it as to ensure the King's safety upon his retreat whilst at the same time securing his conquest against risings by a disaffected population and attacks by the combined forces of the League.

Eventually it was decided that 8,000 horse, 3,000 Swiss, and 3,000 French infantry with part of the artillery should accompany the King; that the fleet, laden with the spoils of Naples, should follow him along the coast; and that an invitation should be sent to Camillo Vitelli to join him with Italian reinforcements in Tuscany. These arrangements took time, and no great effort was made to complete them quickly, since Charles wanted to wait until he had obtained the 60,000 ducats still owing for pastoral dues, which would not become payable until the end of April, and since he still clung to the hope that he might yet induce the Pope to grant him the investiture of the kingdom. The Cardinal of Saint-Malo was sent to Alexander in the beginning of May, to repeat once again an oft-proffered request; he was to propose a tribute of 50,000 ducats a year together with immediate payment of the arrears

due from the Aragonese sovereigns, amounting to 100,000 ducats: he was also to beg that the Pope, if he would not join Charles, should at least abstain from open association with his enemies, receiving him in a spirit of friendliness when he should pass through Rome on his homeward way; and Alexander was to be assured that he need not fear disorders or violence, for the army would encamp outside the walls. The Pope was in a more than usually nervous mood, fearing lest he should be exposed in solitary helplessness to the consequences of Charles' wrath; and only a few days before Briçonnet's visit he had sent for the ambassadors of his allies and told them that he must have more help. Encouraged to show a firm front, however, he plucked up enough courage to refuse the King's request, and on 25th May in Consistory decided to leave Rome with the College of Cardinals. Two days later he set out for Orvieto, escorted by the 2,000 horse which Venice and Milan had sent to his aid.

Charles left Naples on 20th May, and on 1st June entered Rome, being received by the Cardinal of Santa Anastasia, who had been left behind by Alexander to do the honours of the Vatican and to look after the welfare of the Eternal City. The King did not carry out the intention which he had expressed to the Pope of leaving his army outside the walls, and once more the streets of Rome resounded to the tramp of foreign troops; but he had begun to perceive the folly of allowing his soldiery to alienate Italian sentiment by their insolence and violence, and strict injunctions were given that Rome should not be pillaged or its citizens molested. In a letter written a few days after the French had come and gone, a resident described the effect which this unlooked-for forbearance had produced upon the minds of his neighbours. 'On Monday, the first of the present month, the King entered this city with all his troops, mounted and unmounted, to the number of 30,000 men, of whom it is said that not more than 20,000 are effectives. Amongst these are 1,300 French lances, and many arblasters and archers. They are fine troops, full of spirit, and devoted to their sovereign. . . . From first to last they behaved with the greatest restraint, for all the world as though they were so many religious; they won the

affection of the people here, who had been terrified of being ill-treated; and for certain individual misdeeds four offenders were executed.'[1] Perhaps Charles hoped that his considerate treatment of the capital would cause some relenting in the mind of its fugitive master. Perron de Baschi was sent forward on a mission to His Holiness, and on 3rd June Charles himself set out in the direction of Orvieto. Thereupon Alexander retreated hurriedly to Perugia, behind the walls of which city he could feel secure from molestation. It was plain that the Papal Court was irrevocably pledged to the League.

As Charles moved northwards, he was confronted by many political and military problems, none easy of solution, and some of a peculiarly delicate nature. At Siena his intervention was requested in the interest of the rival parties whose struggles for predominance constituted the internal politics of the little Republic. At Pisa the spark which Charles had struck on his outward journey had grown into a conflagration; there was open war between the rebellious city and its former masters; and every man in the place was resolved to suffer any fate sooner than allow the Florentines to reimpose their hated yoke. Yet Charles had solemnly pledged himself to Florence that Pisa should be restored. To obtain that restitution, the Florentines offered military and pecuniary assistance of which Charles stood in urgent need. Should the restitution be refused, they threatened to sever their alliance with him and go over to the League; and although the great influence of Savonarola was exerted on the side of France, yet the presence of Piero de' Medici at Charles' side had aroused in Florentine breasts a suspicious dread of French intentions of which the effects could not be calculated. Charles must deal with these problems, and he must also settle the military questions which awaited an answer. What route was he to follow? Should he, as the Medicis urged, go by Florence? Or should he adopt the no less interested advice of the Genoese exiles, make for Genoa, and dispossess the ruling party, which was in alliance with Ludovic? Or should he listen to Trivulzio and march upon the

[1] Malipiero, 'Annali Veneti', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. vii, p. 345; and cf. Burchard, *Diarium*, ed. Thuasne, vol. ii, p. 659.

Milanese in the hope that his advent would give the signal for rebellion? Or should he reject all these courses, and adopt the advice of his own officers, who urged a retreat by the way which he had followed on his advance? And in that event should he abandon the strong places which secured his communications with Naples, or hold them at the cost of further weakening his scanty force? Should he at the same cost attempt a diversion against Genoa, or concentrate his energies upon opening up the road to Asti?

The King reached Siena on 13th June. He was joined there by Commynes, who was horrified to find how large an influence in the Royal Council was enjoyed by the hot-heads who wanted to keep Siena, Pisa, and the other occupied places, to snap their fingers at the Florentines, and to press on with the Genoese adventure. Commynes had studied the diplomacy of Venice; he had beheld her naval and military exertions; and he felt assured of the bitterness of her hostility. Savonarola, whom he had seen at Florence, had told him that God, who had protected Charles on his outward journey, would protect him likewise on his return; and he hoped that the prophecy would come true, for he respected the prophet, and himself became more convinced with every day that passed—with every fault that went unpunished and every folly that issued in success—that the King's whole expedition was one of the mysteries of Heaven. All the same, he was reluctant to tempt Providence too far or to take unnecessary risks. As he wrote afterwards in his Memoirs,[1] he brought to the King in Siena the numbers of the Venetian horse, foot, and Stradiots, and told him that they meant to put 40,000 men into the field. He begged him to hurry on, for the enemy forces were not yet collected, nor did he fear them until the Germans should have joined them. But no one heeded what he said. And there were two other matters in which they would not take his advice. One was the affair of the Florentine places, which he advised them to restore, receiving in exchange the help of a Florentine contingent and of a large subsidy, with which Charles could have paid his troops. The other was the suggestion, which he advised them to reject, that Siena should be put

[1] Ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, pp. 238–41.

under M. de Ligny : it was an Imperial town, and to seize it would alienate the Empire ; it required a garrison of three hundred men ; and it was inevitable that it would quickly be lost.

At Siena Charles received news of the Duke of Orleans' escapade at Novara, which showed that there was no time to lose. He set out again on 17th June for Pisa, avoiding Florence, since he was suspicious of her attitude, and feared to meet with opposition or obstacles. By whichever way he went, however, he must encounter a difficulty which was partly of his own creation, for, as an historian of Florence has justly observed,[1] he had brought upon himself the embarrassment of the conflict between his inconsiderate promises to Pisa and his solemn engagements to Florence. By the terms of her treaty with the King in November 1494, as the reader will recollect, Florence had agreed that the French should retain possession of Pisa and Leghorn during their expedition upon the condition that they should restore those places when they should conquer Naples or make peace or quit Italy, and that in the meanwhile Florence should retain her rights of fiscal and judicial administration. But the Pisans were determined that never again in any circumstances should a Florentine exercise authority in their town or country : His Most Christian Majesty, they said, had freed them ' from an Egyptian servitude and from the mouth of the cruel lion ', and they could not believe that he meant to revive the tyranny which he had been the means of overthrowing.[2] Charles had not received this protest with the disfavour which his engagements to the Florentines would have made it proper in him to exhibit ; and Pisa had drawn comfort alike from the benevolent attitude of the French King and from the countenance of her neighbours. By resuming diplomatic relations, Siena and Lucca accepted the Pisan revolution ; money was sent surreptitiously by Genoa, which rejoiced in the troubles of the power that had robbed her of Pietrasanta and Sarzana ; and Ludovic, who feared that Venice might forestall him in going a-fishing in the troubled

[1] H. E. Napier, *Florentine History*, vol. iii.

[2] V. Fanucci, ' Le Relazioni tra Pisa e Carlo VIII ', in *Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, vol. xvi, p. 22.

waters of Tuscany, permitted his *condottiere* captain, Lucio Malvezzi, to place his sword at the Pisan service. Inspirited by this support, the Pisans proceeded to expel all Florentines from their territory, to restore their ancient constitution, and to hoist their banner over all the towns and villages which had formerly made up the Pisan State. The distractions of her own revolution and the difficulties of the time had deterred Florence from exerting the strength which might have nipped Pisan hopes in the bud; and the quarrel had settled down into a tedious affair of raids, skirmishes, and sieges, which threatened to degenerate into the long agony of a war of attrition.

Such was the posture of affairs when on 20th June the King of France paid his second visit to Pisa. The promise given to the Florentines that Pisa should be restored, so far from being repudiated, had by implication been confirmed by the Cardinal of Saint-Malo, who had visited Florence in February, to request a further payment on account of the unpaid balance of their subsidy, and had then accepted an advance of 40,000 ducats, though knowing it to be offered by the Florentines on the understanding that it would expedite the restoration of Pisa. As the French approached that place, the promise was once again invoked by Savonarola, who waited upon the King at Poggibonsi, and in impressive tones menaced him with the Divine displeasure, if he should be untrue to his plighted word. What with his own contradictory undertakings and the conflict of opinion among his advisers, Charles was quite unable to make up his mind, and there had been no approach to a decision when the question had already been debated in Council at Siena. When Pisa itself was reached, a conclusion of some sort or another was imperatively called for. The Cardinal of Saint-Malo, Marshal de Gié, and Philippe de Commynes dwelt upon the danger of alienating Florentine sympathies and upon the value of the help which Florence could give in money and in men. Their opponents, led by the young Count of Ligny, retorted that the retention of Leghorn was necessary to the defence of Naples, and that Pisa was safer in French hands than in those of the Florentines, who with characteristic Italian perfidy would probably go over to the enemy as soon as they had got it back. The

rank and file of the army supported Ligny with a vehemence which grew as they listened to Pisan arguments and witnessed Pisan distress. They went to the King and told him that they were ready to lay down their lives in his service: he owed it to them, to himself, to the good name of France, that he should not withdraw the protection which he had himself extended to Pisa; and as for money, if that was what mattered, they would supply it by selling their valuables and forgoing their pay. Feeling ran so high that at the Council board over which the King himself was presiding scenes of violence were narrowly averted, and Briçonnet, Gié, and their adherents were threatened in the streets. That evening Charles attended a ball at which the most beautiful ladies of Pisa were present. Suddenly, as he sat between two of the fairest, they all prostrated themselves at his feet, imploring grace for Pisa and a merciful deliverance from an unendurable ordeal. Charles was not the man to resist the entreaties of his companions in arms and the spectacle of beauty in distress. On the morrow one hundred and fifty French troops were placed in the citadel of Pisa under Balzac d'Entragues; another one hundred and fifty were sent to garrison Leghorn; and seven hundred more were detached for the protection of other places on the Pisan frontier. Ligny had got his way, and in getting it had weakened yet further the little army which yet must traverse, sword in hand, the road that led to Asti.

In the decision to garrison the Pisan places the King could at any rate claim that the whole army was with him. At Sarzana he gave his approval to another plan which that army with a like unanimity condemned as rash. At the solicitation of della Rovere, Cardinal Campo-Fregoso, and the Genoese exiles, he detached a further contingent of 500 horse and 2,000 arblastèrs to co-operate with the fleet under Miolans in an attack on Genoa. In the council-of-war in which this project was approved Commynes argued again—and once more in vain—against the policy of the 'side-show'. The dominant consideration, he said, should be to keep the main force intact; if Charles should prove victorious in the coming battle, Genoa would submit of itself; and if he should be defeated, the place, even if

won, would be of no use. The whole Council shared his view, and among the rank and file the near approach of battle was beginning to exert its influence upon all but the most self-confident. Serving somewhere in a civilian capacity in the army, perhaps as a paymaster under Briçonnet, was a certain Gilbert Pointet, who in July wrote home from Asti to tell his family about his adventures. He thus described the events in Tuscany.[1] 'The King spent the Feast of Saint-Jean at Lucca, and here Marshal de Gié left him, to take forward the advance-guard; and the artillery and Swiss went with him, as it was said that the enemy were awaiting us at the foot of the Pontremoli Alps. From Lucca the King went to Pietrasanta and Sarzana, at which last-named place the Cardinal of Genoa, M. de Bresse, and M. de Beaumont, who were at Spezzia, were summoned to meet him; and upon their arrival it was decided that for their projected expedition against Genoa they should take the companies of M. de Beaumont, the Grand Écuyer, and M. d'Aubijoux, with 2,000 arblasters. This left us with no mercenary infantry but the Swiss, and divers persons were displeased and began to grumble, saying that the thing was ill advised, and that we should probably have some affair on our hands before long, seeing how large an army was said to be before us. However, some did not believe that this army existed, and others held it in contempt. Anyhow, no one could prevent the *gens d'armes* being sent off.'

Anticipating the course of events, I may here record the failure of the Genoa expedition, which had no bearing upon the campaign except in the destruction of Miolans' fleet. Before the French appeared in Liguria, the Governor of Genoa, Agostino Adorno, had put his city in a state of defence, and troops sent by Ludovic and the Venetians repressed its natural inclination towards rebellion. The Count of Bresse and his men could thus accomplish nothing, whilst Miolans' squadron of seven large and two small galleys and two galleons, intercepted by the naval forces of Genoa, suffered a crushing defeat at the very spot where the Duke of Orleans had won the first French victory of

[1] La Pilorgerie, *Campagne et Bulletins de la Grande Armée de Charles VIII en Italie*, pp. 351–2.

the war. The entire French squadron fell into the hands of the enemy at Rapallo. On board of it were many guns, much ammunition, the bronze gates of the Castel Nuovo, which were said to have cost 20,000 ducats, and other Neapolitan booty valued at 100,000 ducats. M. de Miolans and his companions became prisoners of war. Judged by the result, the expedition against Genoa was thus the blunder which Commynes had always declared it to be, and it looked as though his complaint was reasonable that Charles had frittered away in Liguria forces which might have been of supreme value in the crisis of the war. There was something to be said, however, in defence of the expedition. Genoa was so important a place that its capture justified the taking of some risks, and most people in Italy had believed that the French would not merely try a diversion against it, but, to secure its possession, would attempt in full force the perilous march by the sea-coast road. And Genoa was still a hotbed of faction, cursed by the political mutability which had already led to more than one dramatic change in its fortunes, and might again result in the vindication of the forlorn hope. 'The Duke of Milan was greatly concerned about Genoa, fearing lest it might come to an accommodation with the King of France;'[1] and the French move compelled the detachment from the main confederate army of forces which would have been in the ranks of the League at Fornovo, if the Count of Bresse and his companions had remained with the King. The policy of the 'side-show' is often condemned upon the ground of the dispersion of force which it entails; but this consideration is not always the final test. If adequate for the purpose in view, a dispersion of force will have one of two results: either the purpose aimed at is achieved, or its achievement is prevented at the cost of a still greater dispersion of the forces which are at the command of the enemy.

While the French had advanced through Tuscany, the forces of the League had been gathering fast in Lombardy. Of the 40,000 men whom Venice had enrolled, not all had yet joined the colours, and, of those who had joined, some had been lent to Ludovic for the siege of Novara and some

[1] Sanuto, *La Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, p. 396.

drafted into Romagna for the purpose of overaweing Duke Ercole of Ferrara, who hated the Venetians, and was deterred from joining the French only by his uncertainty about the issue of the war. But with those that remained the Signory were able to dispatch a large and well-equipped force to Lombardy, where Ludovic had also begun to collect a second army under the Count of Caiazzo; and the forces of Bologna had joined the confederates as soon as the prospect of getting a military command for one son and a Cardinal's hat for another had opened the eyes of Bentivoglio to the duty of standing by his neighbours. Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, was appointed Captain-General of the Venetian forces in April. On 15th June he reached the camp on the Oglio, and thence marched southwards into the Parmesan. Confident in its numbers, his army looked forward with pleasurable anticipation to an encounter with the little band of barbarian invaders, who, as the Signory were careful to let them know, were accompanied by a train of ten thousand sumpter animals laden with the spoils of Naples.

To make it certain that that encounter would take place they must be sure which route Charles meant to follow, and in this matter there was much uncertainty. In Venice, where the importance of Genoa was fully understood, it was generally held that he would take the sea-coast route; but that route led through a difficult and barren country, and it was possible that the French would either make for Modena or would follow the road they had taken upon their advance, which passed through Pontremoli and crossed the Apennines by the Col de la Cisa. Pontremoli was a Milanese possession, and the Marquis of Mantua, considering that its defence was a matter for his colleague, the Count of Caiazzo, refused to detach troops for the service or to risk his men on the farther side of the mountains. Caiazzo's contingent was small, ill paid, ill equipped, and mutinous. Whilst on his way to Pontremoli, he received intelligence that a part of the garrison had declared for the French. He repeated his demand for reinforcements, and, not receiving them, retired upon Fornovo, leaving Pontremoli to its fate.

The want of resolution and of enterprise which left the

approaches to the Apennines unguarded was of inestimable service to the French. They were following a difficult road, which ran between the mountains and a marshy plain, and Commynes felt sure that a few resolute men, stationed with a couple of guns behind an improvised barricade, could easily have barred the way. The narrow defiles that led to the mountains were still easier to defend, and to leave them unguarded was a capital error on the part of the League's generals. The first consequence was the fall of Pontremoli, and the next the safe occupation of the mountain passes by the advance-guard under Gié. Unhappily, the treatment of Pontremoli made another blot upon the escutcheon of the invaders. When Charles had passed through the place on his outward march, some forty Swiss had lost their lives in a quarrel with the townspeople, and the Swiss regiments under Gié had returned with the intention of avenging their murdered comrades. Notwithstanding the terms of the capitulation agreed to by their commander, they ran amuck in the streets of the unfortunate town, killing the men, pillaging the houses, and eventually setting the place on fire. In the conflagration there perished about a dozen of their number, who were lying drunk in the cellars of looted houses. A more serious loss was a great stock of provisions, which also perished in the flames. These provisions were greatly needed by the army in the sterile region upon which it was entering, and the loss of them was felt the more in that the people of the surrounding country, in their indignation at the sack of Pontremoli, refused to furnish supplies to the French camp.

Some good will often come out of evil, however. In a calmer mood the Swiss were brought to a perception of their folly, and it became their ambition to win back by some signal service the favour and confidence which they had forfeited by their misdeeds. The opportunity for their act of penitence presented itself quickly. The next business in hand was the passage of the mountains, and the road to be followed was 'what Nature had made it'.[1] A single narrow path wound precipitously through the pass; its declivities were so steep as scarcely to be practicable even by the sure-footed mule. The transport of light field

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 256.

pieces over such a road had been thought little less than miraculous, when the army had crossed the mountains on its outward journey. Now sixteen of the heavy guns, which had then been carried by sea to Spezzia, accompanied the troops. To abandon these pieces would be to relinquish the supremacy in artillery which was the chief safeguard of the little army: yet it was difficult to see how to cross the mountains with cumbrous cannon, which teams of thirty-five horses were employed to draw on level ground. The contrite Swiss saw and seized their chance; to win the Royal pardon, they volunteered to haul the guns through the pass. Harnessing themselves to the carriages in teams of one hundred or two hundred men, they toiled under the scorching July sun with prodigious energy and indomitable perseverance. The crooked places were made straight, the hollows levelled, the projecting rocks hacked away. From time to time, despite precautions, one of the monstrous pieces would topple over, and then with infinite toil it must be set upright. When the summit of an ascent was won at last, there came the labour of the descent, more arduous still and vastly more perilous, for then, when the great guns got into motion, it was no easy task to control their movement, or to prevent them from careering downwards with gathering momentum, hurling to destruction the long files of swearing and sweating soldiers who hauled on the restraining ropes. Besides pulling the guns, the Swiss dealt with the munitions, and there was not a man but carried a cannon-ball or a keg of powder, or aided in the transport of the lighter pieces. Jean de la Grange, the Master of the Ordnance, performed the duties of expert supervision, but the general conduct of the operation was entrusted by the King to Louis de la Trémoille, and it was to him that the chief credit of success was due. With his invariable consideration for his men he passed from group to group, serving out food and drink with his own hands. He inspired the troops to greater efforts by sharing their dangers and their fatigues. In shirt sleeves and breeches he worked as lustily as the commonest soldier in the ranks, and wherever a job of peculiar difficulty presented itself, the first volunteer was always La Trémoille, bantering his companions, and shouting out that he would give ten *écus*

to the man who should get to the top before him. Slowly but surely the great guns mounted from Pontremoli; gradually but safely they dropped down on Fornovo; and all the time the presiding genius of the Herculean task was a panting form 'as black as a nigger with sweat and dust', in whom it was difficult to recognize the *grand seigneur* who sat in council with the sovereign and led his armies in war. By the common consent of all ranks the successful passage of the Apennines with guns and munitions intact was due, not only to the dogged perseverance of the penitent Swiss, but also in no small degree to the energy and enthusiasm of Louis de la Trémoille and to the compelling influence of his gay and patient zeal.[1]

Meanwhile beyond the mountains the advance-guard under Gié had got into touch with the enemy. Immediately after the surrender of Pontremoli Gié had hurried forward with 160 men-at-arms and an infantry detachment of 800 mercenaries, to keep the passes open and to occupy the little places which commanded the approaches on the farther side. He proceeded without obstacle as far as Fornovo, but here on Wednesday, 1st July, he found that the Italians were already in possession of the village, and realized with something of a shock that he and his little band were in touch with the outposts of the main confederate force. Retiring on Terenzo, he sent an urgent message to the King to hasten forward and join him quickly. With this summons Charles was powerless to comply, for he still lay near Pontremoli, and the arduous task of getting the guns through the pass was far from completion. It was not until Friday, 3rd July, that the main French force left the neighbourhood of Pontremoli, and it was only on Saturday, 4th July, that it effected its junction with Gié at Terenzo.

Thus for four whole days Gié with his thousand men had lain at the mercy of the enemy, cut off by thirty miles of mountain tracks from all hope of succour, and the failure of the Italians to crush him was a blunder as strange

[1] Bouchet, 'Mémoires de la Trémoille', in Petitot's *Collection*, vol. xiv, p. 425; 'Vergier d'Honneur', in *Archives curieuses*, Series I, vol. i, pp. 377–8; Gonon, *La Très Curieuse Hystoire*, pp. 111–12; Bourdigné, *Chroniques d'Anjou*, vol. ii, p. 265.

and as inexcusable as their neglect to occupy Pontremoli and close the pass. The failure may be ascribed in part to defective intelligence, in part to considerations of convenience, and in part to over-confidence. The confederate leaders did not know how small Gié's detachment was; they had no information about the position of the main French force; thinking Fornovo too small to provide suitable quarters and the confined space around it too cramped for the deployment of their numerous troops, they had preferred to take up a more open position farther down the hills; and so far from desiring to deny Charles access to the plain, they wanted to leave the way open, hoping thereby to lure the French to destruction and to make sure of the rich booty with which their little army was understood to be encumbered. It is at their peril that armies permit the sin of presumption to have the dominion over them; but if ever contempt for the enemy and a confident anticipation of success were pardonable, they might be forgiven in the confederate host which lay waiting below Fornovo for the coming of the barbarian foe. In the French ranks there were no more than 10,000 combatant troops, and it seemed certain that those few could be in no condition to endure the ordeal of battle. The fault which the Swiss had committed at Pontremoli could be expiated, but its consequences could not be undone; for lack of the provisions which had wantonly been destroyed the whole army had suffered acutely from shortage of supplies; and the fatigues and discomforts of mountain marches had told all the more heavily upon men without victuals and upon horses without forage. Moreover, it was known that this sorry company was encumbered by an enormous baggage train and by an unwieldy mass of undisciplined non-combatants. 'I believe', said one of the King's companions,[1] 'that there are fifteen or twenty thousand beasts of burden and countless adventurers and hangers-on, who serve no purpose but to eat our food and to pilfer and rob, and are useless in battle. They give us a bad reputation for honesty, and if you could see their evil conduct, you would be horrified. I should say that

[1] La Pilorgerie, *Campagne et Bulletins de la Grande Armée de Charles VIII*, pp. 359–60.

there are eight or ten thousand of them.' The army of the League was three times as numerous,[1] fresh, well supplied, well equipped, unhampered by useless convoys, and firmly established in a strongly fortified position of its own choice. 'Our veteran men-at-arms say', wrote a civilian official from the camp,[2] 'that alike for horse and foot this is the most powerful army ever seen in Italy. At the last review we had 12,000 horse, of whom 2,800 are heavily armed men-at-arms, the finest in Italy; 1,500 light horse; 800 Levantine Stradiots; and from 14,000 to 15,000 infantry. In addition, there are the Count of Caiazzo's 1,500 horse and foot in the pay of the Duke of Milan. All of them, his as well as our own, are admirably equipped and eager for battle with the barbarians, so that nothing finer than this army was ever seen. . . . The enemy are famished with hunger, and despair of safety. They appear to be about 10,000 effectives, to wit, 6,000 cavalry, including 2,000 light horse, and 4,000 infantry, including 500 Swiss. They have fifty pieces of artillery, large and small, with which I doubt me they will do some harm to our men. . . . The rest of the French force is made up, as I understand, of camp followers and other rabble, to a total of about 15,000 persons.' This estimate of the situation gave ground for confidence. But there were circumstances of which the writer and his informants took no account, and conditions which they overlooked. Over-confident in their numbers, in their captains, and in the reports which reached them of the size and condition of the enemy force, they had forgotten the courage of the French cavalry, the might of the Swiss foot, and the wonderful efficiency of the French guns.[3] On their side, too, the French were animated by a spirit of calm and quiet confidence begotten of the military skill and prowess against which no Italian army had yet dared to match itself. 'We go our own good way,' said the modest and cautious La Trémoille,[4] 'asking

[1] See the note at the end of this chapter.

[2] Malipiero, 'Annali Veneti', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. vii, p. 357.

[3] The remark is Guicciardini's; *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 129.

[4] Marchegay, 'Lettres missives de Thouars', in *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique de Nantes*, vol. xii, p. 43.

nothing from any man.' The King himself had set out upon his retreat with the assurance of having 'such a company that I shall be able to pass anywhere, and to dispose of the obstacles put in my way by those who wish to prevent my return. I ask for nothing, and wish to ask for nothing, from any Signory in Italy; nor have I ever desired aught but to reduce into obedience that which justly belongs to me, and then to return.' [1]

The Marquis of Mantua, who had taken up his command in the Allied camp at Seniga on 21st June, and on the following day had crossed the Po, marching southwards, had reached the neighbourhood of Parma on 26th June, and there had awaited the arrival of the Count of Caiazzo with the Milanese contingent. At the same place he had also been joined by the Venetian Provveditori or Commissaries, Luca Pisani and Melchior Trevisan. On 27th June he moved forwards again towards Fornovo, encamping at Giarola on the right bank of the Taro about three miles below the village. The site of the camp was well selected, for the ground in front sloped down towards the river, while hills protected the rear; and a position of some natural strength was further improved by elaborate trenches and fortifications. In this position Gonzaga was so placed as to cover and contain the town of Parma, the doubtful loyalty of which gave ground for some apprehension, and also to command the only road by which the French could gain access to the Lombard plain.

On the morning of Sunday, 5th July, the French were seen coming down in order of battle from Terenzo. At midday they reached Fornovo, which they occupied without opposition, the Italian outposts having been withdrawn. They found in the village large supplies of food, wine, and fodder, and after the privations they had been enduring the temptation to fall upon them was strong; but they refrained, fearing an enemy ruse, and supposing that they were poisoned, a suspicion to which the fate of two Swiss soldiers, who drank themselves to death in a cellar, seemed to lend some colour. The people of the village offered—at stiff prices—what modest victuals they had, consisting of coarse black bread, weak and sour wine, and a little

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, p. 209.

fruit; but for the most part the hungry troops were obliged to feed as best they could on scraps brought from their last resting-place. A small party sent ahead to reconnoitre was attacked and driven back with some loss by the Stradiots, who cut off the heads of the fallen Frenchmen, impaled them on their lances, and carried them back in triumph to the Allied camp. The blame for this barbarous proceeding did not lie wholly at the door of the wild Albanian horsemen. Carrying into their conflict with the French the practices which had grown up in the savage warfare with the Turk, the Venetians had promised a reward of a ducat for every head brought in, and the first Stradiot to arrive with one of the ghastly trophies was signalled out by the commander-in-chief for a special recompense of ten ducats and the honour of his fraternal salutation. Such were the methods of the champions of Italian culture against the barbarians—the spiritual ancestors of those who in a later age were to place the dissemination of another sort of *Kultur* upon the same moral plane.

During this Sunday afternoon, when, as Commynes tells us, the sight of the great confederate camp had begun to make the wisest feel afraid, some of those about the King of France revived a suggestion, first mooted two days before, that Commynes should be sent to his acquaintances, the Venetians, to try a last attempt at a peaceful settlement: at the best he would extricate the army from a situation of manifest peril, and at the worst he would learn something of the numbers and dispositions of the enemy. Commynes himself had little relish for the proposal; at this late hour, he thought, peace talk could have no result but to inspirit an enemy who would be sure to interpret it as a confession of fear; but he admitted that he knew and was on good terms with the Venetian Provveditori, and agreed that, if approached, they would probably consent to meet him somewhere between the two armies. He was instructed to send a letter proposing such a conference, and a herald was dispatched to bear it to the Allied camp. The reception he met with there was not encouraging. Introduced into the presence of Melchior Trevisan, one of the Provveditori, he was greeted with the rough inquiry: 'What the devil are you doing here?' The herald answered

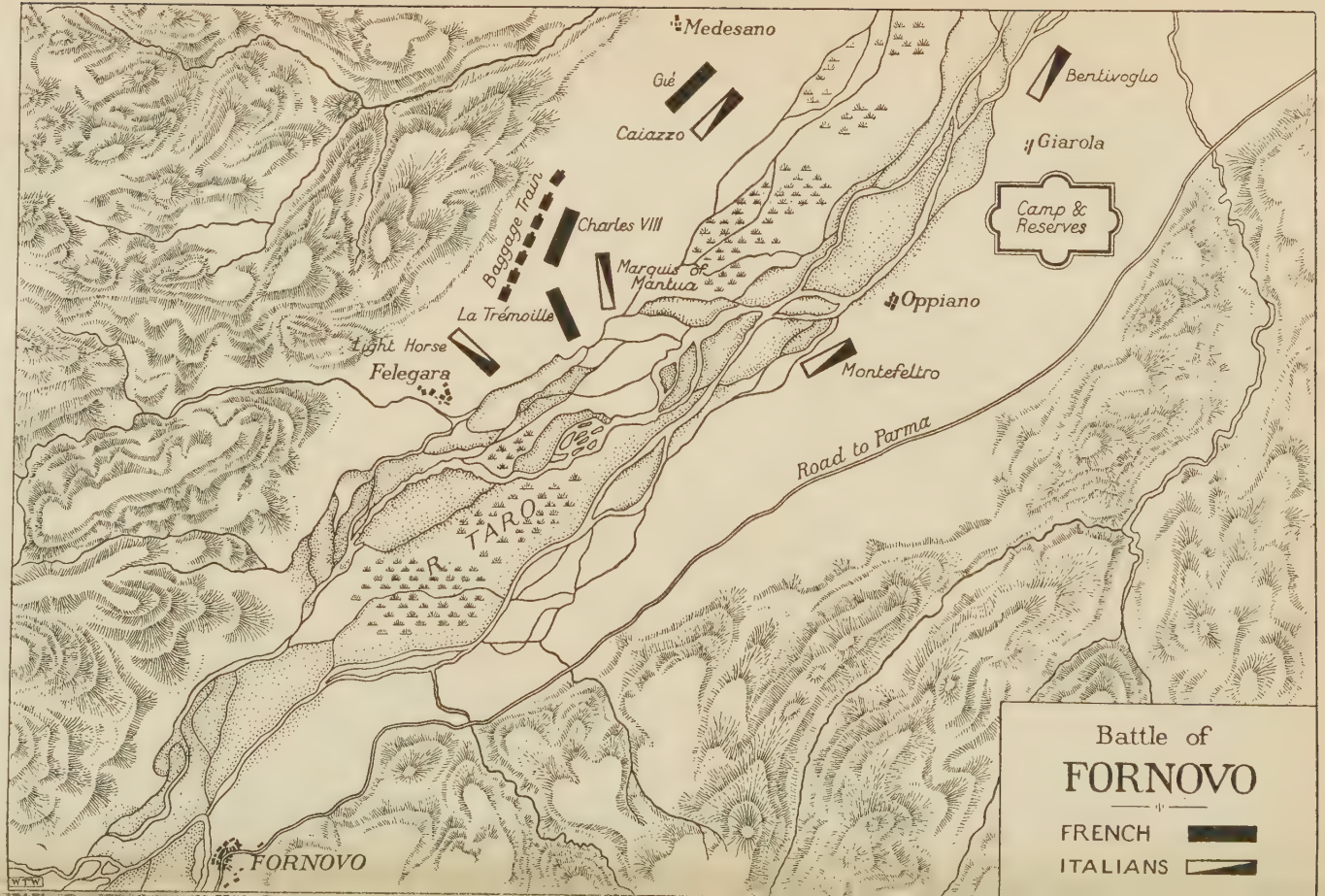
that he brought letters from the King of France to the Provveditori. Trevisan angrily replied: 'To the deuce with you! We want none of your letters here'; and the herald would then and there have been dismissed unceremoniously, had it not been for the intervention of Trevisan's more prudent and less choleric colleague. 'Come here,' said Pisani, 'and let me see the letters.' Their substance was that the French were loath to witness any breach in the ancient alliance between their country and the Venetian Republic, and Commynes, for his own part, had learnt with astonishment that the Republic had placed a great army across the path of his King, who desired merely to return harmlessly to his own kingdom: he desired to know whether the King would be allowed a right of way and facilities for purchasing supplies at market prices. After this communication had been considered in a council of war, one of the Provveditori came out to the herald and told him that the Senate had not entrusted them with powers to treat of peace; but they were in a position to say that, if the King really wanted peace, he must lay down his arms, surrender Novara to the Duke of Milan, and restore to the Pope the occupied territories of the Church; failing this, he would be judged, not by his words, but by his acts. Angered by the unfriendliness of his reception and by the arrogance of the message to his master, the herald replied that he had been sent only to ask for a free passage; should it be refused, the French would know how to hew a bloody way through the bodies of the Italian soldiery. That, said the Venetian, irritated in his turn, they were ready on the instant to put to the proof: not all Italians were effeminate cowards, nor were the military virtues quite dead in their country; and though the French had got the better of the Florentines, the Pope, and the Aragonese, yet their successes were to be ascribed rather to fortune than to their own strength and valour.[1]

To Commynes the Provveditori wrote that they would have met him gladly, had not the French begun war against their ally, the Duke of Milan; and even as it was, one or

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, pp. 263–4; Sanuto, *Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, p. 455; Benedetti, *Fatto d'Arme del Taro*, pp. 54–5.

both would meet him somewhere between the armies. This answer arrived on Sunday evening, and was ignored by the King's advisers, to the chagrin of Commynes, who was eager to win the glory of rescuing the King and his company from their perilous position. He could not venture to press the matter, however: he did not want to be taken for a coward; nor after his disgrace during the Beaujeu Regency could he afford to incur the displeasure of the Royal favourites by thrusting himself forward in support of an unpopular cause. While he was sitting in his tent, lamenting his lost opportunity, about midnight the Cardinal of Saint-Malo came in to see him. He had been with the King, and had been giving him, so Commynes inferred, the benefit of his own lay opinion upon the military situation and the course to follow in the emergency; for he came to say that the King would march past the enemy in the morning, firing off a cannon or two out of bravado, but not halting to offer battle. Commynes told him that, if they were to pass close enough to go loosing off guns, it was a certainty that some of the enemy would come out in arms, and then inevitably a battle must be engaged. The Cardinal's plan, he thought, was about as unpromising a method as could be devised for aiding the progress of his own overtures for peace.

Early the next morning Commynes was sent for by the King, and was told that, if the enemy were willing to treat, he might speak with them; and the Cardinal of Saint-Malo and Marshal de Gié would go with him to the conference. 'Sire,' answered Commynes, 'I will go gladly, but never in my experience have two great companies like these come to such close quarters and then separated without a fight.' Drawing aside with the Cardinal, he then dictated to the King's secretary, Robertet, a letter assuring the Provveditori that the King wished for nothing but to pass harmlessly, and adding that, should they care to treat, the writers would do their best. The Provveditori replied that they were willing to treat, but only upon condition that the French guns, which had begun a cannonade, should cease firing; and this they were ordered by the King to do. Meanwhile the confederate leaders were discussing the question whether at the forthcoming conference they should


Medesano
Gué
Caiazzo
Bentivoglio
Giarola
Camp & Reserves
Baggage Train
Charles VIII
Marquis of Mantua
La Trémoille
Oppiano
Light Horse
Felegara
Montefeltro
Road to Parma
R. TARO
FORNOVO
Battle of
FORNOVO
FRENCH
ITALIANS

entertain the proposals of the French plenipotentiaries. One of the Provveditori was disposed to let the French pass rather than risk the safety of Venice on the uncertain chances of battle; and he was warmly supported by Rodolfo Gonzaga, the uncle of the commander-in-chief, who liked the French, and did not want to fight against them. The opposite view was taken by the Milanese general, the Count of Caiazzo, who maintained that it would be absurd to come to terms with an enemy already as good as beaten; he was backed up by a distinguished *condottiere* leader, Fortebraccio, who argued that the best plan was to give the French enough rope, when they would certainly hang themselves; and the Marquis of Mantua expressed a strong objection to letting the French pass, when the result might be to give the signal for rebellion in Ludovic's dominions and precipitate the dissolution of the Sforza power in some sudden and irresistible convulsion. Thus it was upon an unpromising errand that Commynes and his companion, the Cardinal, rode out between the opposing hosts; but it mattered little, since chance had determined that their pacific efforts should never reach the point of discussion. Suddenly, perhaps by accident, a solitary shot was fired from a Venetian gun, and at once the silent batteries of the French flared out in an answering roar of defiance. The answer to the French demands was to be recorded, not in ink, but in blood.

The village of Fornovo stands at the foot of the Apennines at the apex of the valley through which the Taro flows northwards to its confluence with the Po above Casalmaggiore. Narrowing in on either side at the point where the stream flows out on to the plain, the two chains of low hills which enclose the valley open out again to the south in a kind of amphitheatre, and over the strip of flat ground between them the river finds its shifting and uncertain course. Sometimes the Taro is an insignificant rivulet, trickling peacefully towards the plain; sometimes it is a raging torrent, tearing headlong down, and covering the valley with boulders and stones. Normally, it could be crossed without difficulty by fords, of which the best was at Fornovo, whilst another was at Oppiano, not far from the Italian camp. Like all mountain streams, however, it was

subject to sudden rises from the effects of heavy rains; and when in spate, it could not always be crossed, even at the fords. Elsewhere it presented a serious impediment to troops; the footman might be swept away by the torrent or drowned in its deep and muddy pools; the horseman could scarcely contend with the difficulties presented by high, slippery banks hollowed out by rushing water and crowned by nearly impenetrable masses of thorn and scrub. The road to Parma ran along the right bank of the river at the foot of the hills, and was commanded by the heavily fortified camp at Giarola.

In a council of war held in the evening of Sunday, 5th July, the French decided to cross the river at Fornovo and to continue their advance by the left bank. This was, no doubt, the decision which Commynes learnt from Briçonnet about midnight, and liked so little, perhaps because he did not fully comprehend it. In fact, it was by far the best of which the circumstances admitted. If the army was to advance at all—and retreat was not to be thought of in the presence of the enemy—it must proceed along one or other bank of the Taro, and by crossing to the farther side it would enjoy the twofold advantage of avoiding the heavily fortified position of the enemy at Giarola and of offering battle upon ground which that enemy must cross the river to reach. That this operation would not be easy for them was made the more certain by the state of the weather, for thunder was rolling round the hills, and torrential rain kept falling at intervals throughout the night.

The morning of Monday, 6th July, broke sunless and overcast; but the rain had stopped, the thunder had cooled the oppressive air, and the Italians awoke in high spirits to 'as nice a day for a battle as could possibly be desired'.[1] The French, in humbler mood, betook themselves to prayer, every man dedicating himself with the sign of the Cross to the will of the Almighty, and meekly kissing the ground in which by evening he might not improbably be sleeping the sleep of death. The King rose at six o'clock, breakfasted, and mounted his horse, 'Savoy', the superb black

[1] Malipiero, 'Annali Veneti', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. vii, p. 357.

charger which his cousin had given him at Turin, and which had borne him faithfully throughout the campaign. He was richly armed; over his armour he wore a white and violet tunic, embroidered with Jerusalem crosses in gold; plumes of white and violet waved in his helmet; and the trappings of his horse matched his tunic and plumes. One of his captains greeted him with the words: 'Sire, I have often heard you say that your great desire was to take part in a fine big battle. Behold, your wish is fulfilled!' 'You speak truly,' answered the King; 'they outnumber us by ten to one; but we must force our way through the midst of them. To-day shall I learn who are my friends, and with them I go forth to live or to die.'[1] Charles was barely recognizable in the fever heat of his chivalrous enthusiasm; knightly ardour seemed to transform his puny frame; and in place of his halting speech his comrades heard with wonder the crisp tones of authority and the decisive words of command.

The day was still young when the French marched out of Fornovo in order of battle, with the advance-guard under Marshal de Gié and Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, the main body—the 'battle', as it was called—under the King and M. de Foix, and the rear-guard under Louis de la Trémoille and M. de Guise. Anticipating that Gié must first come in contact with the enemy and bear the brunt of his attack, the French had so disposed their forces as to make the advance-guard by far the strongest of their three divisions; and Gié had under his command the whole of the artillery, 350 men-at-arms, 3,000 Swiss under the Bailli of Dijon, the German bands under Engelbert of Cleves, 300 archers of the guard, dismounted and fighting on foot, and a large number of unmounted Gascon arblasters. In the 'battle' with the King were 600 men-at-arms; and La Trémoille's division, with no more than 400 men-at-arms and 1,000 foot, was weaker still. The hope of the army, said Commynes, was in Gié's division, with its formidable artillery and its invincible Swiss. Its curse was the enormous baggage train and the disorderly throng of non-combatants. These were told to march along the lower slopes of the hills on the left flank of the advance, where, as was hoped, they

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. Mlle Dupont, vol. iii (*Preuves*), p. 421.

would be screened by the combatant forces from hostile attack. But it was easier to plan a course for this mutinous rabble than to induce them to fall in with it. 'One wanted to march, another to stay still; one wanted to eat, another to drink; some wanted to feed and water their horses, others to repair to the place said to be intended for the King's quarters; whereby they threw themselves into growing disorder, and despite their great numbers brought down destruction upon their own heads.' [1]

Meanwhile the Marquis of Mantua had been forming his own plan of battle to meet the dispositions of the French. The determining principle of his plan was an enveloping movement, by which the whole French army, if defeated, must be captured or destroyed, and its main tactical features were the avoidance of serious combat with the powerful advance-guard under Gié and an attack in superior force upon the weak French rear. The Count of Caiazzo was given 400 men-at-arms and 2,000 foot, and was ordered to cross the river ahead of Gié, and by a feint attack to prevent him from giving support to the divisions in his rear. The Marquis himself, who was to lead the main attack, crossed the river below Fornovo behind the rear of the advancing French, taking with him a *corps d'élite* of 600 men-at-arms, a large force of light horse, and 5,000 foot. Another body of light horse was ordered to cross at Fornovo, with instructions to work its way round by the slopes on the French left, and, as soon as the battle should be well engaged, to attack the French in flank. Two hundred men-at-arms under Bentivoglio were stationed on the right bank in support of Caiazzo; a much larger force under Antonio da Montefeltro was detailed to reinforce the main attack; and two large companies of men-at-arms with 1,000 foot were left to guard the camp and form an ultimate reserve. The most explicit instructions were given to all the leaders of the reserves that not a man should be permitted to move until the Marquis' uncle, Rodolfo Gonzaga, should return to them with the order for an advance.

There were skirmishers out in all directions, as the French moved slowly down the valley, but at first no serious

[1] 'Vergier d'Honneur', in *Archives curieuses*, Series I, vol. i, pp. 384–5.

opposition was offered to their advance. When the advance-guard reached the neighbourhood of the Allied camp, a big Italian gun opened fire upon them, doing some damage, but not sufficient to check their progress. The French gunners retaliated by training one of their largest pieces on the emplacement of the enemy gun, and at the second discharge knocked the emplacement to pieces, killing the gunner in charge. In the meantime, Charles had seen the danger to which his weak rear-guard was exposed by the approach of the strong forces under the Marquis of Mantua, and swinging round towards the river on his right, drew up the 'battle' alongside of La Trémoille, to await the coming onslaught. Though something disordered by the passage of the swollen river, in which the water was above the horses' bellies, the Marquis' heavy cavalry charged with a spirit and determination which for a moment almost overbore the French resistance. The King himself, conspicuous in the splendid dress which made him the target of every hostile lance, fought in the thick of the *mêlée*, desperately defended by his chosen companions in arms. A sword blow sundered one of the fastenings of his vizor; another severed the bridle of the Bastard of Bourbon, who was fighting at his side; and the Bastard's mettlesome charger, startled and no longer controlled, galloped off into the midst of the enemy, where his rider was at length taken prisoner after a stubborn resistance, his horse having been killed under him and himself four times wounded.

The Italian attack had come so near to success that it must certainly have prevailed, had there been more skill in the leadership and more discipline among the rank and file. Gonzaga had made the mistake of hurling himself, not against the centre, but against the right wing of the French squadrons, with the result that the French left had been given, and had taken, an opening for a flank attack. Instead of holding aloof, to direct operations, he had 'behaved rather as a common soldier than as a general',[1] plunging into the thick of the *mêlée*, and fighting there until his horse was killed under him; and his uncle, Rodolfo, by whose command the reserves were to be called into

[1] Benedetti, *Il Fatto d'Arme del Taro*, p. 73.

action in the crisis of the battle, had fallen in the first clash of arms. The disastrous consequence was that the large contingents which had been left on the farther bank under Montefeltro and Bentivoglio remained passive spectators of the combat, when they might have decided its issue. Causes quite different had likewise contributed to deprive Gonzaga of the assistance which he ought to have received from his light horse. When the Italian detachment which had crossed the river at Fornovo appeared in La Trémoille's left rear, they found themselves in tempting proximity to the defenceless baggage train, which promptly took to its heels, with the Italians in pursuit. The spectacle was too much for the Stradiots and infantry which had accompanied the Marquis of Mantua, and, lest their comrades should appropriate a booty of which rumour had magnified the value, most of these troops also hurried off in pursuit of the fugitive convoy. As a result, a great part of the French baggage was captured, and some of the attendants slain, but at the cost of depriving the Italian men-at-arms of the help of their supports and of the benefit of the intended diversion in the French flank and rear. Thus deserted, the Italian *gendarmerie* soon began to flinch before the impetuous fury of the best heavy cavalry in Europe; the King's division repulsed Gonzaga; La Trémoille vanquished the squadron under Fortebraccio which had engaged the rear-guard; and the battle soon resolved itself into an affair in which the Italians began to 'rely more on their horses and their spurs than on their hands and their swords'.[1] Some of the fugitives made for the fords by which they had crossed earlier in the day; others, more timorous or more hotly pursued, sought the shelter of their camp by the shortest route, hoping to find a passage across the river, or thinking its swollen waters less terrible than the swords and lances of the victorious foe. But if the fords of the Taro had been difficult in the early morning, it was a perilous business now to attempt a passage at haphazard, for the thunderstorms of the preceding night had rolled back along the hills, and during the battle it had 'never stopped blowing,

[1] Bouchet, *Mémoires de la Trémoille*, in Petitot's *Collection*, vol. xiv, p. 428.

raining, lightening, and thundering, as though all the devils of hell were loose upon the field'.[1] Outclassed by the French *gendarmerie* in the weight of their lances and the strength of their horses, the Italians had already suffered heavily in the battle, and their losses grew, as they fled before the victorious enemy in a vain search for the path to safety. Some were slain as they rode. Those who had been unhorsed fell victims to the ferocity of the valets in attendance on the French men-at-arms, who attacked them with hatchets and axes, as they lay prone and helpless in the cumbrous mass of their defensive armour. After clearing the left bank of the river, the pursuing French paused for a few moments to rest their horses, and then trotted back towards the scene of action. On their way they intercepted the main body of enemy foot, which was making for the ford at Fornovo. A single charge scattered it, and the carnage began once more.

It is now time to see what had been happening to Gié, whom we left under the fire of the enemy guns, completely cut off from the rest of the French force by the King's retrograde movement in support of La Trémoille. The Count of Caiazzo had attacked the French advance-guard at the same moment that the Marquis of Mantua had attacked the other section of the force. His object was to contain Gié and distract his attention from the real conflict near by, and his attack was not therefore intended to be pressed home; but it was delivered with a feebleness which turned the feint into a farce. Though Gié's guns were barely serviceable from the effects of the rain on his powder, the gunners contrived to discharge a few of them, and though the result was rather noisy than dangerous, it served to terrify Caiazzo's infantry, who flung down their arms and ran away. Charging languidly under the discouraging influence of this example, the men-at-arms found themselves confronted by the terrible pikes of the Swiss, and when a few had been knocked off their horses and killed, the rest immediately retired. They were not pursued by Gié, who could see the large enemy reserves on the other side of the river, and deemed it unwise to risk another encounter, of which the issue might be less favourable to his side.

[1] Vergier d'Honneur, p. 393.

Some of Caiazzo's retreating men-at-arms made for the ford at Fornovo, their path taking them across the scene of the recent action in the French rear. Thus it happened that the King, who had already been in imminent peril during the Marquis of Mantua's charge, was no sooner freed from that danger than he found himself in another as grave. History has such frequent occasion to censure the conduct of Charles VIII that it should in fairness pause to bestow praise upon the occasions when praise is due. Such an occasion was the battle of Fornovo, in which the King behaved with a cool intrepidity which would have done credit to an older head and a more stalwart frame. When Commynes rejoined the King after his fruitless attempt at negotiation, Charles was making his way towards the front rank of the 'battle', and having stationed himself there, he had permitted none but the Bastard of Bourbon to stand between himself and the charging squadrons of Italian horse. Plunged in the thick of the fight, he had so carried himself as to justify the verdict of the official report that 'in that day no man bore himself more courageously than the King'.[1] When the enemy took to flight, with the French in pursuit, Charles was pressed to remain behind, and he had stayed on the field, accompanied only by a handful of young lords. Except for a *valet de chambre*, 'a small man and ill armed', he was entirely alone when Caiazzo's fugitive troop came galloping down the field. They recognized him, and attacked him furiously; and before any one could come to his rescue, there was a perilous interval in which he had to rely on his own right arm and on the strength and spirit of his superb horse. Luckily, the party of young men was not far off, and coming up at the gallop, they drove the Italians away. To avoid a repetition of such risks, Charles then sought shelter in the still unbroken ranks of Gié's division.

Those ranks were unbroken, because, as we have seen, Marshal de Gié had allowed the Count of Caiazzo to retreat without attempting to pursue. It was the belief of Commynes that, had the advance-guard then moved forward but a hundred yards, the whole of the enemy host would

[1] R. de Maulde-la-Clavière, *Procédures politiques du Règne de Louis XII*, p. 669.

have taken to flight; and in the opinion of other critics there was little doubt that, if Gié had followed the retiring enemy, Caiazzo and the reserves would have been driven along in the confusion of a common rout, and the whole Italian host would have been utterly defeated. The flight of the Marquis of Mantua's squadrons had already produced consternation across the Taro; the Parma road was full of fugitives; and if at that moment the troops of Caiazzo had been seen in flight, the spectacle must have produced a panic which the authority of the leaders would have been powerless to stem. Whether in fact it would have been right for Gié to pursue was a question, said Commynes, upon which opinions differed; and echoes of that discussion have been heard down to our own day. Brantôme tells us how Henri, Duke of Guise, used to discuss the battle of Fornovo, blaming Gié for his lack of enterprise, and maintaining that he should either have followed boldly across the stream or have sent back a part of his force to the King's assistance. Others have argued that the prudence of Gié saved an army which a hot-headed, thoughtless daring must have endangered, and might have destroyed. It may at any rate be claimed for Gié that his decision, whether right or wrong, was endorsed by the verdict of a council of war held upon the field at the close of the day, when the whole extent of the French success was known. The King's Italian officers, Trivulzio, Francesco Secco, and Camillo Vitelli, pleaded eagerly for a bold pursuit; they knew the pernicious influence of the sham warfare to which their countrymen were accustomed, and could estimate the effect which so bloody a day must have produced upon the morale of the beaten foe. Not without much force, however, the French captains represented that, whilst their own small army was exhausted by its privations and exertions, more than one-half of the numerous enemy had not yet been engaged; the weather was bad, evening was coming on, and it would be folly to send tired troops across a rising river upon a rash and unnecessary adventure. In adopting this view, the council of war implicitly approved the line of action which Gié had previously followed. There are occasions in war when discretion is the better part of valour, when it is unwise to engage the enemy more

closely, even though that enemy be in full retreat. There can be little doubt, in my judgement, that it was with such an occasion that Marshal de Gié had been called upon to deal. Gié at Fornovo carried a heavy burden of responsibility. Entrusted with an instrument of priceless value, upon the safe handling of which mighty issues hung, he found himself confronted with the momentous problem how far that instrument might properly be hazarded in the pursuit of overwhelming success. Had he followed the Italians over the rising waters of the torrent in his front, he might have inflicted upon them a defeat which would have destroyed the League, roused the Milanese, relieved Novara, and saved Naples. But he had to weigh the uncertain chances of battle and to reckon with the dire results of a reverse. Upon the preservation of the French advance-guard depended the safety of the King of France, the escape of his army, and the integrity of his kingdom. The main object of his operations having been attained, no additional success, however spectacular, could have justified its leader in taking a single additional risk.

As the evening began to close in, the King withdrew to a small hamlet [1] about a quarter of a league from the field of battle, and prepared to spend the night with such comfort as was possible in the circumstances. Owing to the rout of the baggage train the French had no tents, no changes of clothes, and no supplies of food. Charles slept in a miserable farm-house, sharing his quarters with the sick and the wounded. Around the farm were a few hovels, within which some of the chief lords managed to find shelter; but most of Charles' companions were obliged to sleep where they could, with no covering but the sky and no bed but the earth. Commynes spent the night in a vineyard, lying on the wet ground, and deprived even of the protection of his cloak, which he had lent to the King in the morning and had not got back. Those dined who had food, but they were few, and crusts begged from the servants made up the bill of fare with which many a noble but hungry stomach was constrained to satisfy its appetites. A hardship still more difficult to bear was the great want of water, for the hamlet possessed but one well, and that was quickly fouled.

[1] Probably on the site of the modern Felegara.

In the rout of the baggage train the Stradiots had captured thirty-five pack-horses, including those with the richest loads, and it was estimated that, when all was reckoned up, spoils to the value of at least 100,000 ducats had fallen into the hands of the Italians. The losses included the King's sword and helmet, two Royal standards, several Royal pavilions, the King's prayer-book and relics, and the rich fittings and vessels of his chapel. A loss more curious, and perhaps not less regretted, was reported by Alessandro Benedetti, a Venetian doctor, who was serving with the army of the League, and has left us one of the best accounts of those stirring days. He tells us how he saw in the plunder an album full of portraits of the mistresses to whom Charles had given his affections in the various cities of Italy. The rich booty served as the pretext upon which the Venetian Signory proceeded to set up a claim to victory, decreeing to their general a triumphal entry and a splendid reward. Their claim might have inspired mistrust in the critical: they could not pretend that the enemy's progress had been stopped, or allege that he had been driven from the field, or include his guns among the trophies; but Venice after its anxiety was not in the mood to scrutinize good news too keenly. There was wild enthusiasm on the Rialto, where bets were made that the King of France would be found among the dead; and some Savoyard merchants, mistaken for Frenchmen because of their dress, were set upon by the crowd and forced to flee for safety into a church. 'The Venetians', wrote a diarist who bore them no affection,[1] 'have been celebrating the battle in which they were defeated, to inspire their soldiers with a belief in their victory. Such conduct is in accordance with their habit, which has been, and always will be, to fire salutes, ring joy-bells, and make feasts after incurring some loss or receiving some bad news.' The Marquis of Mantua made his own contribution to the pretence by ordering the erection of a votive chapel and commissioning Mantegna to paint for it the 'Madonna della Vittoria', which hangs to-day in the galleries of the Louvre.

Yet in their heart of hearts the Venetians and their general must have known well enough that the struggle on the banks of the Taro had resulted in their defeat. They

[1] *Diarium Ferrariense*, in Muratori, vol. xxiv, col. 311.

had themselves indicated the object which they had meant to pursue: 'the importance of these operations lies in preventing the French from reaching Asti.'[1] Confident in their immense numerical superiority, they had expected to wipe out the little army which marched under Charles' banners, killing or capturing the King himself, and thus anticipating by a generation the battle of Pavia. Writing to his wife before the battle, the Marquis of Mantua had told her that the army he was commanding was 'the finest and most powerful seen in Italy for a great time', and added that it would suffice, not merely to resist the French, but to exterminate them for good and all.[2] The result bore small resemblance to this confident anticipation. 'By the general consent the palm was adjudged to the French, having regard to the great difference in the respective losses, to their having driven the enemy back over the river, and to the fact that the way was left open for them to pass, which was the matter in dispute in the battle.' So said Guicciardini,[3] and the explanations and apologies of the Marquis of Mantua and his colleagues proved the correctness of his verdict. Writing from the camp of the League the day after the battle, a Venetian paymaster, Daniel Vendramino, admitted that 'the enemy . . . have not suffered the defeat which we expected and desired'.[4] A fortnight after the event Bernardino Fortebraccio, who had commanded the division which attacked La Trémoille, and had been left for dead upon the field, addressed to the Signory this reluctant admission: 'I must say this, for I cannot keep it back. We could have defeated this army, or even a still larger one, if our people had attended to the battle and not to the baggage train.'[5] The Marquis of Mantua himself confided to his wife his secret disappointment; he told her that, if only others had fought as he and his followers had done, a complete victory might have graced his arms, and lamented the disobedience and cowardice of the Stradiots, who first plundered the enemy,

[1] Malipiero, 'Annali Veneti', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. vii, p. 353.

[2] A. Luzio and R. Renier, 'Francesco Gonzaga alla Battaglia di Fornovo', *ibid.*, Series V, vol. vi, pp. 210–11.

[3] *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 138.

[4] Malipiero, 'Annali Veneti', p. 356.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 370.

and then fled, although no man pursued them. 'These things', he added, 'have caused me the greatest grief that I have ever known.'[1] It was in the famous battle of the Taro, thought Paolo Giovio,[2] that 'Italy lost her ancient military renown. Foreign nations, which had been in awe of us until a short while before, began to regard us with a shameful contempt, and to the deplorable results of this unfortunate battle are to be attributed the miseries which have since come upon us in the enslavement of Italy.'[3] A modern historian has summed the matter up in the remark that 'the Italians rejoiced over their victory, but the French had better reason for rejoicing. The battle of Fornovo displayed the military incapacity of Italy.'[4]

On the morning after the battle a truce was arranged for the purpose of collecting the wounded and burying the dead. Commynes availed himself of it to send a trumpet to the Allied camp, to propose a resumption of the negotiations which had been interrupted by the battle; and the messenger presently returned with an invitation to meet the representatives of the League midway between the two camps. The King appointed the Cardinal of Saint-Malo, Marshal de Gié, and the Sieur de Piennes to act with Commynes; the Marquis of Mantua, the Count of Caiazzo, and the two Venetian Provveditori represented the confederates. Both parties approached the Taro, but each was so distrustful of the other that neither would agree to cross the river. The French delegates desired that Commynes should go over by himself, with instructions to make any proposals which he might think suitable. He did not relish the task, fearing lest he might be disavowed; but he suffered himself to be over-persuaded, and at length consented to go. In an adroit speech he praised the valour of the Italian men-at-arms, who had not been afraid to attack the finest cavalry in Europe, deplored the conse-

[1] Luzio and Renier, *op. cit.*, pp. 221–2.

[2] *Istorie del suo Tempo*, trans. Domenichi, vol. i, p. 96.

[3] It is interesting to note that Giovio's verdict is in precise contradiction of the claim put forward by the Marquis of Mantua, who told a correspondent on 12th July that he was able 'dire senza alcuna jactantia che per questo facto d'arme, non solo si è recuperato l'honore italico, ma la liberta del tutto': *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series V, vol. vi, p. 224.

[4] Creighton, *History of the Papacy*, vol. iii, p. 212.

quent result in loss of life, and requested a safe-conduct for his companions to cross the river on the following morning. The Marquis of Mantua, who thought that his uncle, Rodolfo, had been captured, asked him to make a special point with the King of having the prisoners well treated.[1] Commynes replied with a request that every kindness might also be shown to the Bastard of Bourbon, discreetly suppressing the unfortunate truth that the French had given no quarter, and therefore had made no prisoners.

Commynes then returned to the King, who proceeded to hold a council in the squalid hovel at Medesano which had now become the Royal head-quarters. The council settled nothing except that Commynes was to go back to the enemy delegates, and inquire what proposals they were ready to submit. But the negotiations of the day had taken much time; night was falling when Commynes got back to the river bank; the Italian plenipotentiaries had gone away; and a Venetian trumpet advised him not to cross, as the guard was composed of Stradiots, who could not be relied upon to observe the customs of civilized warfare. The trumpet added that he would remain where he was, meet Commynes in the morning, and escort him to the Allied camp. Commynes thanked him, and said that he would come back at eight in the morning; in the event of any change of plan he would send a herald to apprise him of it; 'for I did not know what decision the King might take, seeing him the recipient of secret counsels which I misliked'.[2]

Once more that night the French supped on what they had and slept on the ground. Soon after midnight Commynes went to the King's room, where he found the chamberlains in riding-dress, and was told by them that His Majesty was minded to set out with all speed for Asti or for the territories of the Marchioness of Montferrat. They suggested that he should stay behind and carry on the negotiations, but he begged to be excused, saying that

[1] It seems that Commynes also made a private attempt to seduce the Marquis from his allegiance, but that his overtures were proudly repelled: see Luzio e Renier, 'Francesco Gonzaga alla Battaglia di Fornovo', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series V, vol. vi, pp. 224–5.

[2] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 290.

he had no liking for getting himself killed with his eyes open, and when it should come to the point of riding off, would not be the last in the saddle. Soon the King awoke, heard mass, and an hour before dawn got on his horse. To deceive the enemy, a trumpet sounded the signal, 'Faictez bon guet,' and thereupon the army turned its back on the Italian camp and set out upon the way to safety. The start was depressing. For six miles the army had to march in single file over narrow, tortuous, and sunken roads through woods, and the way was soon lost, for there were no guides. However, says Commynes, God had led the company on its outward way, and Savonarola had predicted that He would still conduct it on its return. And it seemed, indeed, as though Providence had taken the French under its protection. It was midday before the enemy, still awaiting a resumption of the conference, noticed that anything was amiss; and by then the river was so swollen that none could venture to essay a crossing. It was not until four o'clock in the afternoon that the Count of Caiazzo managed to get over with 200 light horse; and even then the force of the torrent made it a perilous business, and some of his men were drowned.

Meanwhile the army had got clear of the intricate woodland roads, and had emerged on to the open plain. At Borgo San Donnino, on the high road from Parma to Piacenza, a halt was called, to rest the troops, and in the afternoon another ten miles' march along the high road brought the army to Fiorenzuola, where the night (8th July) was spent. The next night was spent near Piacenza, and here a grave peril was met with through the carelessness of the French dispositions. The bulk of the troops crossed the Trebbia, taking with them six guns; the rest of the artillery, with 200 lances and all the Swiss, was left on the southern bank. The Trebbia is ordinarily a placid little stream, and the French had forgotten—what their recent experience of the Taro might have impressed upon them—that small streams are sometimes liable to sudden rises. About ten at night the Trebbia began suddenly to rise, and was soon impassable. The two sections of the force were thus entirely separated, and the enemy was near, for Piacenza had been occupied by a Milanese force of 4,000

horse under Fracassa di San Severino. Luckily, Fracassa made no move, however, and about five o'clock in the morning of Friday, the 10th, the waters began to subside, when the troops which had been left behind contrived to get across with the help of ropes stretched from bank to bank. That night the army bivouacked in a wood near Castel San Giovanni, the inhabitants of which passed them provisions and provender over the walls; and by the evening of the 11th they had reached Ponte Curone, twenty-seven miles farther on. The night of Sunday, the 12th, was spent near Tortona, which had also been occupied by Fracassa, who had come on from Piacenza; but he not only refrained from all attempts to molest the French, but even supplied them with provisions, and apologized for his inability to accommodate the King in suitable quarters in the town. On the 13th the army reached Capriate, a place belonging to Trivulzio, and on the 14th slept at Nizza della Paglia, in the territory of Montferrat. The night of the 15th was spent in the fields near Alessandria, and on the following day Asti was reached at last.[1]

In Asti a great abundance of food had been collected by the provident foresight of Georges d'Amboise; carts filled with corn, bread, meat, poultry, and wine stood so thick in the market-place that it was no easy matter to pass about between them; and in a plenty as great as that of Paris itself the tired troops sat down to indemnify themselves for the exertions, privations, and perils of their hurried retreat. In eight days they had covered one hundred and twenty-five miles. It had been a trying experience. Not once had they slept in proper quarters, and though the country-folk had brought in some food, the dearth of provisions had been great. For two whole days Commynes had eaten nothing but a little black bread, and there had been many worse off than he. Every man, no matter how high his rank, had been obliged to shift for himself, and at the end of a long day the noblest man-at-arms must go out in search of provender and carry it to his horse in his own arms. Still worse was the scarcity of water, which had made a torture of the long marches in the humid heat of

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, pp. 287–98.

a sultry July. For the greater part of the time the thirsty troops had nothing with which to quench their thirst but roadside puddles or the stagnant water of the ditches which intersect the Lombard plain; and into those ditches all ranks would plunge up to their middles in their eagerness to drink. Torrential rains had ruined the roads, the guns kept sticking in the mud, and it was all that teams of forty or fifty horses, aided by as many men, could do to pull them out. Yet not a gun nor a cannon-ball nor an ounce of powder was left behind, not a man was lost, and not once did Commynes hear a word of complaint, 'though the journey was the roughest I ever made in the course of my life, and I have had some trying times with Duke Charles of Burgundy'.[1] It was a fortunate circumstance for the French that Caiazzo's numbers were small, and his energy smaller still, for a vigorous pursuit must greatly have multiplied the difficulties of the retreat. A company of Germans, well supplied with culverins and arquebusses, had sufficed to keep off the Italian horse; but even so the presence of the enemy had occasioned annoyance and apprehension. 'We had few mounted men', said Commynes, 'who would put themselves in the rear; for the nearer we got to a place of safety, the less inclination for fighting did our men display. Men aver that this is the nature of the French, who are said by Italian historians to be braver than men in attack, but in retreat more timid than women. It is, I think, a fact that the French, so far as their cavalry are concerned, are as terrible to meet in battle as any troops in the world; and as for the lack of courage in the giving up of an enterprise, there is not a nation on earth that does not show less courage then than in the act of going out to war.'[2]

While Charles had been marching to Asti, the Venetian version of Fornovo and of his precipitate retreat had spread over Italy, causing huge joy in the localities where French ways had been little esteemed. In Rome the news had been received with joy-bells, bonfires, and illuminations, and the Pope, mindful of his promises to the League, had thought it appropriate to emphasize by his spiritual fireworks the celebration of victory. In a Bull dated the 5th August

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 295–6.

His Holiness complained that, although he had often admonished the King of France not to come to Italy, nevertheless he had come with a great army, and had seized upon the patrimony of the Church, while in Rome and the neighbourhood his soldiers had committed many atrocities, such as murders, arson, and pillage. To the great scandal of the Apostolic Faith he had gone off with the brother of the Turkish tyrant, who had died in captivity, whilst rejecting the Pope's own proposals for a crusade. After taking possession of Naples, he had returned with his great army, committing more horrible cruelties, murdering women and children in the churches, and behaving with a fury of which the Turk himself would not have been guilty. He had occupied Terracina and Cività Vecchia, Papal places, and by entering Pisa, Siena, and other towns he had violated the jurisdiction of the Holy Roman Empire, which was under the protection of the Holy Roman Church. When the Venetians and the Milanese desired to defend their territories, he had fought a bloody battle against them, and then had ordered the raising of new levies in his dominions. If he were to remain quiet under these outrages, said the Pope, he would be like a dumb dog which cannot bite; and Charles, with his barons, captains, soldiers, and confederates, was cited before the Papal Court, to hear the pains and penalties pronounced against the disobedient.[1] The King replied by sending to the Pope his own account of the battle of Fornovo, protesting against his unwarrantable jubilation, and telling him that those who wished ill to France had small reason to rejoice in the course which the war had followed.

But Charles had to give his attention to matters more serious than an empty display of Papal animosity. At Asti he had found security, but he did not find repose, for the Duke of Orleans was still besieged in Novara, and urgent messages began to succeed each other in which he told the King of the necessity which would constrain him to surrender, should he not be promptly relieved.

On receipt of the news of Orleans' *coup de main* the Venetians had detached some of their troops to go to the assistance of the Duke of Milan, and a considerable

[1] *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, vol. i, p. 66.

force had marched against Novara under Galeazzo di San Severino and Bernardino Contarini. Leaving Vigevano towards the end of June, this force reached the neighbourhood of Novara on the 1st July, and encamped a few miles away at Lumellogno, where it could cut off supplies and prepare for a siege, pending the arrival of the main confederate army, which was then at Fornovo. This army arrived on the 17th July, dislodging the small bodies of French which had occupied outlying positions at Casalgiate, Borgo Vercelli, and Cameriano, and completing the investment of the city.

The Duke of Orleans had been but a short time besieged when his position began to grow critical. The fortifications of the city were far from strong, the old walls being protected, indeed, by a double ditch, but having few bastions; he possessed scarcely any guns; and after the arrival of the Marquis of Mantua his garrison of 8,000 men was outnumbered by four to one. His troubles were soon increased by an alarming scarcity of food and by the execrable weather which produced outbreaks of dysentery and malarial fever among his overworked and underfed men. One of the first operations undertaken by the Marquis of Mantua's army was the diversion of the water which turned the Novarese mills, duly completed by the destruction of the mills themselves (20th July). Having always relied on its water-power, the city had no mills turned by animals and few operable by hand; and to make bread it must now treat its corn as best it could with the slow and inefficient pestle and mortar. A strict rationing system was introduced, but even so the daily allowance had speedily to be cut down below the level of necessity. The investment of the city was only a fortnight old when it was learnt in Venice that the scarcity within it had become acute; the supplies of corn, meat, wine, and forage were giving out; the meat was horse-flesh; the wine—what little there was—was sour; a small loaf cost a large sum of money, and was an unappetizing and indigestible thing made of unripe, ill-ground, unsifted corn, and only half cooked by reason of the dearth of fuel. 'There is nothing left,' a deserter reported to the Milanese commander on the 30th July. 'A piece of bread the size of your fist is sold

for a quarter of a *livre* ; a flask of detestably sour wine costs a *livre*, and even at that price it is not to be bought. . . . The hand mills are wholly inadequate. The troops are deserting in masses, and there are only *francs-archers* left. The Duke of Orleans has at most 800 Swiss or Germans fit for service, 300 Italians, and 200 lances. . . . As for the Germans, he is trying to keep up their spirits by distributing additional pay, on the ground of the costliness of food. Everything is as bad as can be : Novara cannot hold out.' [1] Under such conditions it was inevitable that sickness should work havoc among the troops, especially among the Swiss, who were unaccustomed to privation, and felt in an especial degree the lack of wine, which they were reputed to prize above gold and silver. The muddy streets soon began to be full of dead and dying men. The Duke of Orleans himself suffered from a quartan ague, and was very feeble. Ill as he was, he would permit himself no indulgence, nor listen to counsels of despair. Contenting himself with a soldier's rations, he sent to the sick in hospital the more delicate fare from his own table. Bracing himself to the effort, he still continued to ride through the city, so as to keep up the spirits of the garrison, and to take his turn at night duty, so as to set an example of endurance and resolution. So long as a man could crawl to the walls, he would hold out in the sure conviction that sooner or later the King, whose army was so near at hand, must march to his relief.

Reduced to this pitiable condition, Novara must soon have succumbed but for the demoralization of the besieging army and the divided counsels and lack of enterprise among that army's leaders. Ludovic wanted to reduce the place by famine rather than by assault, since the city was his and he wished to recover it intact. Other views were held by the Venetians, to whom the place did not belong, and to whom its fate was therefore a matter of indifference. They had no relish for a long siege, which must in any case be costly, and might not improbably become dangerous. The operations were costing them 100,000 ducats a month ; their camp was exposed to attack on three sides, from Asti, from Vercelli, and from Novara itself ; and the condi-

[1] R. de Maulde-la-Clavière, *Histoire de Louis XII*, part i, vol. iii, p. 264.

tion of the besieging army gave rise to anxiety. The unhealthy weather conditions which had led to the sickness in Novara had exercised their baneful effect in the besiegers' camp, where the heavy rains had made the ground a swamp; here, too, malaria and dysentery were rife; the temper of the large contingent of German *landsknechte*, who suffered much from a humid heat to which they were unaccustomed, was insubordinate and quarrelsome; and amongst the unruly Stradiots also the state of discipline left much to be desired. The Venetians therefore urged the prosecution of the siege with all the vigour of which the besieging army was capable, and at their instigation the investment was tightened up. The introduction into the beleaguered city early in August of a convoy with four carts of corn and twenty-eight head of cattle was the last success of the French. On the 3rd Ludovic came in person to the confederate camp, accompanied by the ambassadors of Spain, Naples, and Venice, and by his beautiful wife, Beatrice, the constant partner, not only of his pleasures and joy, but also of his anxieties and toil. On the 15th an assault was delivered, in which some of the suburbs were captured and burnt. On the 26th the enemy learnt that a body of 1,500 French under Coligny and La Palice would make a further attempt to introduce a supply train under cover of night, and made their disposition to intercept it, with the result that the escort was driven back with serious loss and the supply train captured. Ten days later one of the few remaining entrances to the town was closed by the capture of the monastery of S. Francesco, in which the Marquis of Mantua placed a strong garrison. Next day another suburb fell into the hands of the enemy, and Orleans' troops, no longer able to defend the outlying positions, set fire to the remaining suburbs, and withdrew within the walls. There, what with famine and sickness, fatigue and anxiety, the distress was unendurable, and day after day Orleans smuggled out cipher messages in which he begged piteously for help. 'Novara is straitly besieged,' a Pisan envoy wrote[1] to his masters from Turin on the 7th September. 'The Most Christian King has tried to succour it twice already. The first time he succeeded; on

[1] *Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, vol. xvi, p. 50.

the other occasion he lost 2,000 horses. But I do not think that he can aid it more, for the troops which were expected from France have not come, and already the winter is upon us, and the snows are beginning to make it doubtful if it be any longer possible to cross the mountains. It is thought that Novara must surrender in two days, for those within it are dying of famine, and must give in as soon as they realize that the King can do nothing more for them.'

What had Charles been doing all this time, the reader may wonder, and why had the army at Asti accomplished so little for the relief of the beleagured garrison ? Some historians would have us believe that the answer is to be found in the King's love of pleasure and careless indifference to the fate of his men ; he had left Asti for Chieri, they say, and was more interested in the seduction of his host's daughter than in the salvation of his cousin's force. But the love affair with the beautiful and accomplished Anna Solaro is much less well authenticated than most of Charles' Italian amours ; and, however that may be, the relief of Novara presented difficulties which the utmost energy and determination could not readily have surmounted. The force at Asti had been through a long campaign and an arduous retreat ; exhausted by privations and fatigue, it had little stomach for further fighting ; and wholesale desertions were emptying the ranks which sickness had already thinned. Money was scarce ; the bad season was approaching ; the arrival of reinforcements was doubtful ; the enemy outnumbered them by more than three to one ; and to attack they must operate in a country intersected by a network of ditches and canals and turned into a quagmire by the incessant rains. The disputes by which the Council had been divided at Siena and Pisa broke out again with renewed violence over the question of Novara. The contention was now between the soldiers and the civilians. Georges d'Amboise, Archbishop of Rouen, the confidential adviser of the beleaguered Duke, pressed for active hostilities ; and he was warmly supported by the Cardinal of Saint-Malo. The soldiers believed that Briçonnet had been bribed by Orleans, but perhaps he was merely actuated by the passion for rash adventure which will sometimes seize upon the

politician who is not going to share in the risk. The military leaders thought that enough had been done for glory, declared that it was out of the question to go to battle against such overwhelming odds, and maintained that, unless reinforcements could be procured from France or Switzerland, the only course left open was to effect the deliverance of Orleans by a composition with the enemy. Commynes was particularly active in pressing upon the King the need for peace, and he was supported both by his old enemy, La Trémoille, and by the Prince of Orange, who had lately come from France, and was in high favour with Charles. He told the Cardinal in the King's presence that, if he did not take the initiative in pacific effort which was incumbent upon him as a Churchman, he, Commynes, would take it at the first opportunity that offered. The declaration was applauded by the King's *entourage*, and Charles himself did not seem to be displeased.

Commynes had already made one attempt to reach a composition, but it had been defeated by the suspicions of the Venetian Signory and the jealousy of Briçonnet. Towards the end of July, before Charles had left Asti, he had sent to the Provveditori and asked if he might have a safe-conduct to visit them. The Provveditori immediately complied with his request, but his application to the King for permission to act was refused through the influence of the Cardinal of Saint-Malo. In the meantime the Signory, informed by Ludovic of the French overtures, had written to their officers, regretting their precipitancy and counselling extreme mistrust. 'Be on your guard night and day,' they advised the Provveditori, 'for we know French artifices and astuteness. We hear that Commynes has asked for, and has been given, a safe-conduct. His stay here convinced us that he is as clever and crafty as can be, and his insidious overtures to yourselves before and after the battle may have given you an idea of his character. His visit is dangerous, and is prompted by some pernicious scheme. We should have preferred that you did not receive him, but probably the thing is now done. On no account allow him or any of his people to stay in our camp, or to have any dealings with any one, or to send any message to Novara. Keep us informed of all offers that may be

made, press on the siege of Novara, and see to it that the place is not revictualled.' [1]

A month later fortune presented Commynes with the chance which he had told Briçonnet that he meant to seize. On the 27th August there occurred the death of the Marchioness of Montferrat, leading to a dispute over the Regency between the Marquis of Saluzzo, a cousin of the young ruler, and Constantine Arniti, the brother of the dead Marchioness. Fearing lest the dispute should furnish Ludovic with a pretext for intervention, Charles deputed Commynes to go to Casale and end the controversy in favour of Constantine. Soon after his arrival there came a representative of the Marquis of Mantua, the bearer of condolences from his master; and in the course of conversation he and Commynes discussed the war, and agreed that peace would be in the best interests of both sides. The Mantuan agent thought that the first move should come from the King, since the League comprised the spiritual and temporal heads of Christendom. Commynes did not accept the contention, but he was too eager for peace to be balked by unsubstantial questions of precedence and diplomatic etiquette. He therefore consented to write to the Provveditori and to the Duke of Milan, offering his services in the cause of peace (7th September). The moment was auspicious. The French knew that Novara was at the last gasp, and despaired of being able to relieve it. Ludovic and the Venetians were perturbed by the financial strain of their operations, by the sickness and mutinous temper of their troops, and by terrifying reports from Switzerland which declared that the Alpine warriors were mustering in their thousands to march to the aid of the King of France. Except to the bellicose French prelates, therefore, an opportunity for discussion was generally acceptable, and Commynes returned to the King at Vercelli to renew his pacific efforts. About the same time an officer of the Duke of Ferrara came to visit the Royal camp. Ercole of Ferrara, the ally of France and the father-in-law of the Duke of Milan, with a son in each camp, had been selected as a suitable go-between. His son in the French camp,

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, pp. 301–2; Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Lettres et négociations de Philippe de Commines*, vol. ii, p. 121.

where he served under Trivulzio, was ill, and the Duke's officer came on the pretext of visiting him. Really he was commissioned to approach the Prince of Orange and arrange a meeting between the plenipotentiaries of the opposing sides. After another heated debate in the Council this course was sanctioned by the King.

Accordingly, on the 15th September, the Prince of Orange, Marshal de Gié, Commynes, Piennes, and Trivulzio went out to a point midway between their own last outpost at Borgo Vercelli and the first outpost of the enemy at Cameriano, and were met there by the Marquis of Mantua and the commander of the Stradiots. Acting as spokesman for Orange, who had little Latin and less Italian, Trivulzio expressed the regret of Charles at finding Venice among his enemies, declared that he desired peace, and requested permission to revictual Novara while terms of peace were under discussion. The Marquis replying that he must refer this proposal to the Provveditori, it was agreed that the present meeting should be followed by further conferences; and on the morrow representatives of Venice and Milan visited the French camp. They remained in Vercelli for three days. By then their presence seems to have got on the nerves of the Cardinal of Saint-Malo, who suddenly broke out in a violent tirade against Ludovic and his allies, and put forward extravagant proposals, which he declared to constitute the minimum French demands. So impossible were these terms that even Trivulzio, a vigorous advocate of war *à outrance*, was moved to whisper to the enemy representatives that Charles would be content with less, and they need not be alarmed.

On the 24th September the French plenipotentiaries returned to the confederate camp, when the conferences were continued in a room in Ludovic's apartments. Here two rows of chairs were arranged facing each other, the French occupying one row, the Italians the other. The French delegation had been strengthened by the addition of Raoul de Lannoy, Seigneur de Morvilliers, and of President de Ganay, whose knowledge of Latin qualified him to act as spokesman for his colleagues. The League was represented by Duke Ludovic, whose wife sat at his side, the ambassadors of the King of the Romans and the King

of Spain, the Marquis of Mantua, the two Provveditori, and the Venetian envoy to Milan; and the representative of Ferrara was also present. Ludovic alone spoke for the League, and it was expected that only Ganay would speak for the other side; but the French were not always able to repress their natural excitability of temperament or to conform with the requirements of a formal discussion. When two or three of them began to speak at the same time, Ludovic would cry out: 'Hi, there, one at a time, please.' Besides orderly discussion, the conference aimed also at methodical procedure. As each point was agreed, it was written down by the secretaries in French and Italian, and before each adjournment the two texts were rehearsed for comparison and final approval.

The restitution of captured places, the restoration of ships and prisoners, the repayment of loans, and the payment of indemnities were the points which chiefly engaged the attention of the plenipotentiaries. The places in dispute were Novara, Genoa, and the Neapolitan port of Monopoli, which had lately been seized by a Venetian squadron. In this matter the Provveditori said that they had no instructions, and they would listen to no proposals. Touching Novara, the main difficulty was to find a way by which the French could relinquish the place without offence to their sensitive honour. Charles' ambassadors began by declaring that their master would make no agreement without first seeing the Duke of Orleans, for whom they accordingly requested a safe-conduct to visit the French camp. To this Ludovic replied that he had nothing to do with the Duke of Orleans; it was not he who had taken Novara, but the troops and money of the King of France: but after consultation with his colleagues he eventually consented to let the Duke visit the King upon the terms of returning immediately to Novara, should the peace negotiations be broken off. Later on, it was also agreed that the garrison should be allowed to come out, the town being left in the custody of its own inhabitants under oath to give admission to neither side. Genoa, said the French, their King required because of its convenience for the recovery of Naples. To this Ludovic answered that the place had been given to his ancestors, and it would be

strange if he should be deprived of it. He was then asked if he would give security that Charles should have full liberty to equip fleets there; he had spent much on the conquest of Naples, it would be a shame to abandon it, and Ludovic ought to surrender the citadel of Genoa as security. 'I was not the cause of the expedition,' replied Ludovic, 'nor is the fault mine, if he have lost it. I am not willing to surrender the citadel. If you will be honest, so will I; if you want peace, so do I; if you want war, then I want war, and so do all in this camp.' [1]

These threats were merely bluff; Ludovic was bent on peace. With the Venetians, who saw their way to acquisitions in troubled Naples, no agreement could be reached; they persisted in their contention that hostilities could be ended only by the consent of the whole League. In spite of their refusal to join, the Duke of Milan determined to go on, and on the 9th October he signed a separate peace with the King of France. The citadel of Genoa was to be put in neutrality for two years in the hands of the Duke of Ferrara, who gave hostages for its due return to the King. Charles was to be at liberty to equip fleets in the Genoese dockyards, undertaking that they should not be employed to the detriment either of Milan or of Genoa itself. Ludovic undertook that he would give no help to the Aragonese, nor allow any of his subjects to serve against the King of France; that he would supply ships to carry French reinforcements to Naples; that he would give free passage through his territories to all troops sent by Charles to Naples, provided that no single detachment exceeded 400 men-at-arms or 4,000 foot; and that he would join the King with all his forces, whenever he should go in person to the recovery of his kingdom. The ships and guns captured at the second battle of Rapallo and those interned in Genoa were to be restored to the King, and the Bastard of Bourbon, the Sieur de Miolans, and other prisoners were to be released. Payment of the money lent to Charles was to be remitted or deferred, and 50,000 ducats were to be given by Ludovic to the Duke of Orleans as an indemnity for the expenses of his expedition to Novara. Novara itself was to be restored to Ludovic, who renounced all claims

[1] Sanuto, *La Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, pp. 609–12.

to Asti, and agreed to withdraw his men from Pisa. He undertook to pardon the Novarese, granted a complete amnesty to all who had served the French, and promised that Trivulzio, della Rovere, and other adherents of France should be reinstated in the enjoyment of their possessions and benefices in the Milanese. Charles agreed to give back the confiscated goods of Milanese subjects, to restore their trading rights within his dominions, and to do nothing to further the claims of the Duke of Orleans to the Duchy of Milan. Ludovic would use his influence in Rome to procure the withdrawal of all ecclesiastical censures pronounced against the King of France. Liberty was reserved for the Venetians to adhere to the treaty within two months on the terms of recalling their fleet from Neapolitan waters and giving no more help to Ferrantino ; and it was provided that, if they should not adhere, and war between France and Venice should continue, the Duke of Milan would render assistance to Charles.[1]

The peace of Vercelli was not a bad bargain for the King of France. He had given up Novara, which he could not save. He had bound himself not to support the claim of Orleans to Milan, but had never meant to support it. In other respects he had extricated himself from an awkward situation upon terms which could not be regarded as unfavourable. Not only had he given up none of his own claims to Naples, but he had provided for the continued pursuit of them, and had prejudiced the chances of the Aragonese. The League, which aimed at their protection, had been dealt a damaging blow, for Ludovic had broken faith with Venice and all his allies, and the liberty reserved for Venice to adhere to the treaty was a hollow diplomatic sham. Venice, as Ludovic well knew, had no intention of giving up the Neapolitan ports to which she had begun to help herself on the pretext of helping Ferrantino. But Ludovic cared nothing for that, and nothing for the Aragonese. His one object was to rid northern Italy of the French, and this the peace would accomplish. The terms mattered little, for they need be observed no further

[1] Dumont, *Corps Universel Diplomatique*, vol. iii, part ii, pp. 331–3; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 157; Delaborde, *Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*.

than might happen to suit him after Charles had recrossed the Alps. About the time when negotiations had first been begun, Louis de la Trémoille and Philippe de Bresse had been overheard talking, as they came out from the Council chamber. La Trémoille had indicated his opinion that peace was probable. De Bresse had replied: 'I should not mind an arrangement with the Venetians, but I do not fancy the idea of negotiations with that traitor, il Moro.'[1] The event seemed to justify his suspicions, for the treaty was only a few weeks old when Commynes, after a second visit to Venice, where he had tried in vain to secure the adhesion of the Signory, was sent to the Milanese ruler, to demand the fulfilment of obligations which he had already begun to ignore. Ludovic endeavoured to avoid an interview with him. When at length obliged to grant it, he got rid of the importunate visitor by promising that he would dispatch the required orders to Genoa, and, as soon as he had done so, would send a courier after Commynes, so that he might take the news to his King. Often, as he rode homewards, Commynes looked behind him in the hope of descrying Ludovic's messenger on the road; but the messenger never came, and the orders were never given.

It had been a condition of the truce which had been arranged at the outset of the negotiations that Orleans and his companions should be permitted to come forth from their living death in famished and fever-stricken Novara. When Marshal de Gié went to escort them to Vercelli, a pitiable spectacle confronted him. Of the force of seven thousand men who had entered the place a few short weeks before two thousand were already dead. So emaciated were the living that they looked more like spectres than men, and not six hundred could by any possibility be regarded as fit for active service. Many were too weak to cover the ten miles of road which separated them from the Royal camp; they fell in scores by the roadside, and died where they lay. Fifty, who collapsed in a garden near Cameriano, were saved by Commynes, who spent an *écu* in getting them soup. At Vercelli some hundreds more succumbed, either from illness contracted during the siege or from the effects of over-indulgence after their terrible privations.

[1] Sanuto, *La Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, p. 569.

Novara was evacuated by its garrison on the 24th September. On the 26th September the Swiss contingents, summoned to raise the siege, reached Vercelli. Negotiations for assistance from the Cantons had been begun by Orleans at the moment of his occupation of Novara, when in return for a contingent of mountaineers he had offered to give up Bellinzona, Lugano, and Locarno to the Swiss, to guarantee payment of all sums due from the King, and to pay as much again out of his own pocket when he should have become Duke of Milan. In response to this offer 2,000 volunteers had enrolled themselves in Orleans' service. But that accession of strength was not sufficient for Charles, when he returned to Asti and found himself confronted with the task of relieving Novara. Taking up the negotiations on his own account, the King sent two envoys to Switzerland, to propose a renewal of the alliance between France and the Cantons on the terms in force at the death of Louis XI ; and in August he gave a further commission to the Bailli of Dijon, who had served on many such missions in bygone times, and enjoyed a great influence with the Swiss. Charles asked for 4,000 or 5,000 men. So strong was the love of adventure among the mountaineers, and so irresistible the attraction of French gold, that more than 20,000 men flocked to the colours.

The arrival of the mercenaries revived the hopes of the war party in the French Council, who argued that Charles might now conquer Milan and make himself master of all Italy, and pressed for a rupture of the negotiations with the League. But those negotiations were far advanced ; Novara had been evacuated ; and though the Swiss might be there, the money with which to pay them was lacking, and there was no immediate prospect of obtaining it. Thus the peace party managed to retain its influence with the King, and the negotiations continued. Orleans, furiously angry, made secret proposals to the Swiss captains for a march on Milan. On the eve of departure he suddenly bethought himself of his duty to his sovereign, and made a clean breast of his designs. Charles refused to give his sanction, and ordered Orleans to return with him to France.

The coming of the Swiss terrified Ludovic, and the

vision of his dominions overrun by those formidable bands had helped to hurry him into the conclusion of the rather dishonourable bargain to which he had set his hand. Nor were these bands much less alarming to the side which had called them in. Asked to stand by at the burying of the hatchet when they had come for scalps, the mercenaries were in an ugly mood, and a report got about that they meant to indemnify themselves by seizing the persons of the French King and his chief nobles and holding them to ransom. Some outrage of that kind might well happen, if Charles should be unable to satisfy their legitimate demands for pay; and his financial resources were slender. To relieve the embarrassment in which he had been involved ever since the beginning of the campaign, he had been dependent either on subsidies from France or on profits from Naples: the apathy of his kingdom had closed one source of supply, and the improvidence of his administration in his conquest had closed the other. In December 1494 we find him repeating with greater insistence a demand for loans which the French clergy had quietly ignored; and in February 1495 he was obliged to reiterate in peremptory terms the order for the payment of municipal contributions which had already been asked for more than once before.[1] The expedition had not so much as begun when Orleans had to forward to him the remonstrances of his captains. Their men had not a penny; a few had received a small dole, but those newly joined had had nothing. They could not obey the order to march, and soon would be obliged to resort to the deplorable expedient of living off the country. Moreover, there was a complete dearth of forage for the horses which were awaiting embarkation on the coast. 'I assure you, my lord,' the Duke went on, 'that the condition of the poor *gens d'armes* is pitiable, and all is due to the failure to remit money, about which I have written so often that I fear I become wearisome. But the matter concerns me closely, for I have constantly induced the troops to go on expecting this money, in reliance on your written assurances; but I am proved a liar, so that I know not what

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol iv, pp. 103–5, 129–30, 117–18, 178–9.

to tell them, and am in the greatest possible perplexity.'[1] Matters had not improved as the campaign proceeded, and a letter which the King addressed to the home Government in the autumn of 1495 showed how unsatisfactory was the position immediately before the arrival of the Swiss. 'I have repeatedly written, and more than once sent messengers, to expedite the business in which are involved my welfare and honour, the safety of my realm of France, and the preservation of Naples and of all the fine men I have left behind me there. Nevertheless, I am not yet told that the money has been sent. I could not have believed that my revenue officials would have left me in this danger and dishonour. I am sending you another messenger; dispatch him post-haste to the Generals of Finance, to find out what is wrong, and with whom the fault lies. This business, in which my safety, welfare, and honour are at stake, is important and urgent, and if I be not aided to the extent required and within the time specified, I will show them by my actions that I deem myself ill served, whilst at the same time rewarding those who have done their duty, so that the others may profit by the example and learn to pay more attention to my affairs. . . . It is no small thing to have on one's hands 25,000 Swiss without having the money to pay them. . . . I am not here for fun, but to save France from war and expense and to secure Naples and the trusty servants I have left there; and methinks that, when I endanger my own person and the lives of my good company and of the strangers who come forward freely to serve me, my officials should see to it that the company suffers no inconvenience. For lack of the cash so often asked for I have been compelled, to my shame and hurt, to send round to the towns and private houses hereabouts and borrow at high rates of interest whatever could be had; and even so the result has been paltry enough, so that I have barely been able to pay the Swiss a franc or a franc and a half a man. . . . Not only is this damaging to my reputation, whereat my enemies rejoice marvellously, but it also grieves my friends and

[1] *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series V, vol. xv, p. 106. Two months later (October 1494) the expedition came near abandonment for lack of cash: *Revue Historique*, vol. lxxii (1900), pp. 293–4.

servants, and may bring about some lessening in their affection and good will, which would be a lamentable result. The fault is irreparable, for, God willing, I might have finished off my business in September, whereas by reason of the delay and of my inability to find money I fear lest I may now be obliged to give the Swiss an extra month's pay. . . . The revenue officials are condemned by all who understand my affairs, and to tell the truth, I myself cannot but feel ill pleased with them, for they have shown a want of respect for my person and for the welfare of my kingdom. As I have told you, it is much better to face the expense and have done with it than to let it drag on over the winter and end in the loss of men, money, and conquests.' [1]

The picture which Charles here drew of his financial straits was depressing enough to justify the anxiety of those who had pressed for an early termination of hostilities. As soon as the treaty of Vercelli was signed, the King escaped from the neighbourhood of his dangerous auxiliaries, and made ready to return to France. The transport for the crossing of the mountains was collected at Susa, and in less than a fortnight all was ready. Leaving Susa on the 23rd October, Charles crossed the Alps by Mont Genèvre on the 25th, reached Grenoble by way of Briançon on the 28th, and on the 7th November arrived once more at Lyons. Fifteen months had passed since he had ridden out through its gates upon the expedition which was to open a new and bloody chapter in the history of Europe.

Note.—It is impossible to establish with precise accuracy either the numbers engaged on either side at Fornovo or the respective losses of the two armies. In both computations the best that can be done is to strike the mean of discordant estimates, making due allowance for the means of knowledge and reliability of the different authorities.

As regards the size of the opposing armies, it would seem tolerably safe to assume that there were not more than 10,000 effectives in the French ranks, and that the Italian army was at least three times as numerous. Commynes put the enemy numbers at 35,000 to 40,000 in all, of whom 2,600 were men-at-arms, each with his mounted arblaster, 5,000 were Stradiots and light horse, and the rest infantry (*Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 261). The 'Vergier

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, pp. 289–92.

d'Honneur' (in *Archives curieuses de l'Histoire de France*, Series I, vol. i, p. 393) says that the French numbered 9,000 or 10,000, the enemy 50,000 or 60,000. The official report of the battle printed by de Maulde in his *Procédures politiques du Règne de Louis XII* (p. 668) does not give the French total, but says that the enemy numbered 30,000 in all. The account in Mlle Dupont's edition of Commynes (*Mémoires*, vol. iii, p. 420), the author of which claims to have obtained his information from the Bastard of Bourbon, puts the King's force at 7,000 or 8,000 men, the enemy at more than 60,000. Another contemporary estimate, that of Gilbert Pointet (see above, p. 241, and La Pilorgerie, *Campagne et Bulletins de la Grande Armée de Charles VIII en Italie*, p. 354), reckons the enemy at 36,000 to 40,000; while an ordinance of 5th February 1496 speaks of 'Venetians, Lombards, and others to the number of 50,000 or more' (Mlle Dupont's edition of Commynes, vol. iii, p. 426, and *Ordonnances*, vol. xx, p. 493). As we have seen, the Venetian civilian, whose letter from the camp I have quoted at p. 248, put the Allied force at about 30,000 and the French at 10,000 combatants. In this estimate of the French effectives he is supported by his contemporaries, Benedetti (*Il Fatto d'Arme del Taro*, p. 57: 1,300 men-at-arms, 2,600 mounted arblasters, 6,000 Swiss, 400 unmounted arblasters, 200 light horse), Corio (*Istoria di Milano*, vol. iii, p. 588), and Sanuto (*La Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, pp. 465, 473). As regards the confederate forces, Sanuto alleges that these fell short of 30,000 men, while an historian of Milan, Cagnola, confirms the higher estimate ('Storia di Milano', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. iii, p. 198).

Upon the question of the respective losses of the two armies the authorities are even more difficult to reconcile with one another. Commynes puts the French loss at about 100, including camp followers, and the enemy loss at 3,500, including 350 men-at-arms (*Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, pp. 281–2). The King himself alleged that, whereas the enemy had lost 4,000 men, his own losses amounted to 60 or 80 (Canestrini et Desjardins, *Négociations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane*, vol. i, p. 626; *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, pp. 265–6, 270–1, 275, 282). Graville wrote to du Bouchage that the Italians had lost 300 men-at-arms and 1,000 foot, whilst the King had lost only a few gentlemen of the Household and 50 or 60 archers (Rosmini, *Dell' Istoria . . . di Gian-Jacopo Trivulzio*, vol. ii, p. 220). The Duke of Orleans was informed by his chamberlain, Jacques de Thenray, who was present at the battle, that the French losses in all ranks were 30 or 40 dead and 30 prisoners, whilst the Italians had lost 200 or 300 men-at-arms and 1,000 foot (La Pilorgerie, *op. cit.*, pp. 349–50; and cf. the account at p. 358, where the figures given are 50 or 60 French dead and 4,000 Italian). The French official report claimed an enemy loss of nearly 4,000 as against 25 Frenchmen killed and 5 taken prisoners

(R. de Maulde-la-Clavière, *Procédures politiques du Règne de Louis XII*, p. 669).

As might be expected, the general tendency of Italian writers is to magnify the French losses and to minimize their own. Piero Vettori, writing to the Duke of Urbino on 14th July, told him that 3,000 men had fallen at Fornovo, of whom one-third were French (Canestrini et Desjardins, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 625). Benedetti (p. 82) and Corio (vol. iii, p. 596) gave the same estimate. Sanuto (*Spedizione*, p. 479) reversed the figures, alleging that out of a total of 3,000 dead 2,000 were French; whilst Malipiero, evidently thinking that he might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, boldly put the French loss at 2,500 dead and about 800 prisoners, and the Italian loss at 500 ('Annali Veneti', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. vii, pp. 359–60; and cf. Navagero, 'Historia Veneta', in Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. xxiii, cols. 1205–6—Italian loss, 1,200; French loss, 4,000). A suitable comment upon such estimates is a quotation from a letter addressed to the Marquis of Mantua by a correspondent to whom he had sent an account of his 'victory': 'There are people about,' said this friend, somewhat unkindly, 'who say that many more Italians fell than French; but, no doubt, when your people cleared up the field, they found it difficult to be sure of the nationality of nude and bloody corpses' (Luzio e Renier, 'Francesco Gonzaga alla Battaglia di Fornovo (1495) secondo i Documenti Mantovani', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series V, vol. vi, pp. 228). A few Italians were more modest in their claims. The author of the *Diario Ferrarese* admitted that, whilst the Italians had lost 600 men-at-arms, the French had lost no more than 25 or 30, with 200 prisoners (Muratori, vol. xxiv, col. 310); Paolo Giovio put the Italian casualties at more than 4,000, the French at 1,000, not counting camp followers (*Istorie del suo Tempo*, trans. L. Domenichi, vol. i, p. 96); and Guicciardini believed that the French lost less than 200 men, his own countrymen more than 300 men-at-arms, including many gentlemen of high birth, and 3,000 other ranks (*Storia d'Italia*, ed. Gherardi, vol. i, p. 137).

If we assume that the Italians lost 3,000 men at the least, and the French 200 at the most, we shall have reached a conclusion which seems upon the whole to have behind it the greatest weight of reliable authority. It is this conclusion which commends itself to one of the most eminent of modern Italian historians (Cipolla, *Storia delle Signorie Italiane dal 1313 al 1530*, vol. ii, p. 726; and cf. A. von Reumont, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom*, vol. iii, part i, p. 221: 'Dreitausend blieben auf italienischer Seite, . . . während der französische Verlust zweihundert Mann nicht überstieg').

XV

THE LOSS OF NAPLES

Our story now returns to Naples, where we must follow the fortunes of those to whom the King of France had entrusted the defence of his conquest. Charles, as his letters show, was greatly concerned about the fate of the 'fine men' whom he had left behind; nor was his anxiety unreasonable, for their numbers were small, and their position was one of manifest danger. Lest he should imperil his own safety when retreating overland in the face of the hostility of the League, he had been obliged to withdraw from Naples a full half of his army: yet the whole of that army would have been none too big for the protection of the kingdom. The force at the disposal of his lieutenants amounted at most to 10,000 men. The command-in-chief devolved upon Gilbert de Montpensier, who had been appointed Viceroy. The head of one of the younger branches of the House of Bourbon, Montpensier was a brave and chivalrous gentleman, honourably distinguished from his more rapacious associates by the integrity that had stood proof against all temptations; but whilst he might be relied upon to do no harm, it was to be feared that he might do no good, for Commynes thought that he had little prudence, and it was certain that he had little energy, loving his bed so well that he rarely left it till noon. Under him Stuart d'Aubigny, who had been made Constable, was responsible for Calabria; Apulia was entrusted to l'Esparre; de Vesc, the Grand Chamberlain, was captain of Gaeta; a brave young officer, Précy, commanded the forces in the Basilicate; and a well-known soldier, Gracien de Guerre, was commissioned to defend the Abruzzi. Claude de Lenoncourt ruled in Aquila, Gabriel de Montfaucon in Manfredonia. At Monte Sant' Angelo, in the Capitanate, authority was exercised by a quaint person, who deserves a passing notice: the Seigneur de Domjulien, its captain, was wont to array himself in a white robe

spangled with large sham jewels, to bear a horned demon emblazoned on his banner, and to make his men go into action to the war-cry of 'Diable'.[1]

After the King had marched away northwards, the army of occupation was isolated by land, and it would be wholly by good luck if it should not find itself isolated by sea also. Not only were its numbers inadequate to the claims which would be made upon it, but its material equipment also was lamentably insufficient. Constrained to postpone his own retreat until he had collected the residue of the pastoral dues, Charles had been unable to leave behind him any cash reserve, and his lieutenants were obliged to make shift with what they could save from the wrecked revenues of a disordered conquest. The improvidence of the French administration and the growing alienation of the Neapolitans conspired to make it certain that money would be hard to come by, and the lack of it would be intensified by the negligence of the King and his favourites and the shameless rapacity of French subaltern officers. If the stock of arms and provisions in the Castel Nuovo had been husbanded, it might have served for months to come to replenish the supplies of an army henceforth dependent upon its own resources; but Charles had given all away to any who cared to take a share, and the contents of the great dépôt were scattered to the winds. A king so reckless with his own could not expect of his officers economy or honesty or providence; and half the castles of the country had been stripped by their captains, who had sold their contents and pocketed the proceeds. The time was coming when the French must reap what they had sown; and it would be but an ill harvest.

In a secret report by one of their agents the Venetian Senate were assured that the French, wherever they had been, were detested for their cruelty, dishonesty, immorality, violence, inhumanity, and treachery, their name so stinking in Neapolitan nostrils that the people of the kingdom would prefer the rule of the Turk or the Devil to the government of the King of France. Whilst the excesses of the soldiery had estranged a fickle populace, the adherents of the Angevin cause had been utterly discouraged

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 233 n.

by the cold indifference with which they had been treated, and no longer felt much inclination to incur risks for a master who had so ill requited their past sacrifices. Thus with every day that passed it became more clear that there would be little opposition when the partisans of the defeated faction should venture once again to raise their heads. So long as Charles had remained in Naples, the Aragonese lords had feigned submission, but in secret they had maintained relations with their fugitive Prince, and some of them had been privy to a conspiracy against the French King which a few penniless adventurers had organized shortly before his departure. For the moment, overt action was too dangerous to be thought of, but it was known that Charles meant soon to go home with many of his troops, and then the conspirators would summon Ferrantino to return, and would hand over to him the towns and castles which they controlled. Some important places, which the French had not troubled to reduce, had never acknowledged Charles' authority, and the Aragonese standard still floated over the walls of Brindisi, Gallipoli, and Otranto. On 20th May, the very day on which Charles left Naples, Ferrantino sailed across from Messina, landed at Terranuova, and appeared before Reggio, which opened its gates—an example immediately followed by other towns in the vicinity. At the same time Apulia began to rise under Ferrantino's uncle, Federigo, his natural brother, Don Cesare, and Camillo Pandone, its former Governor; and the progress of the insurrection was hastened by the arrival of a Venetian fleet of twenty-four galleys, convoying five ships full of Stradiots from Corfu, by the consequent fall of Monopoli, and by the capture in a skirmish of the French Governor, l'Esparre. Nor was it only in the distant south that the smouldering embers of revolt began to flicker into flame. In Naples itself there was a beginning of insurrection on 16th June, and immediately afterwards Gaeta attempted unsuccessfully to throw off the French yoke. Aquila about the same time sent to inform the Venetians of its eagerness to recognize the authority of the Republic of St. Mark, and without awaiting an answer rose in rebellion, refusing tribute to the French. So strong was the resentment of the Neapolitans, and so insecure the

authority of the French, that even quite small places plucked up courage to shut their gates against Charles' officers.

In the province of Reggio di Calabria, not far from the spot where Ferrantino had landed, the little town of Seminara was built high up among the hills. Commanding the narrow valley below, it was a position of some strength, and troops would find the district around it a difficult country in which to operate. On 26th May Ferrantino was joined at Reggio by Gonsalvo de Cordova. The forces which they had brought with them from Sicily amounted to no more than 600 horse and 5,000 foot, but in Calabria the House of Aragon had many partisans, and volunteers had begun to flock to the Aragonese standard as soon as ever it had been unfurled at Reggio. Finding that the army at his disposal had thus increased to respectable dimensions, Ferrantino prepared to put into execution a plan of operations which he had concerted with the Spanish general. Moving out of Reggio, he advanced upon Sant' Agata, which opened its gates, and then appeared before Seminara, where he was likewise admitted without any attempt at resistance.

These events called insistently for vigorous action on the part of d'Aubigny, whose whole position in Calabria would be undermined if the progress of the enemy should continue unchecked. Intent upon their own operations, the Aragonese were paying no attention to him, his force being so inconsiderable as to occasion them no anxiety. He was aware of this negligence, and determined to carry out with secrecy and speed a concentration of all the troops which could be collected in Southern Calabria : the Swiss garrisons were brought in from the fortresses of the province ; messages were sent to the Angevin lords to come in with their levies ; and Précy was summoned from the Basilicate with the troops under his command, which were composed largely of Swiss. At the head of these united forces d'Aubigny then moved on Seminara.

The enemy knew nothing of d'Aubigny's junction with Précy, and were without information about his now considerable numbers. Welcoming the prospect of a decisive trial of strength when they heard of his approach, they moved out of Seminara, to await his coming in the valley

near by. It was in vain that Gonsalvo pleaded for caution. He knew that his light horse were as little fitted to encounter the French cavalry as were Ferrantino's raw levies to stand up against the Swiss, and he urged the importance of making a reconnaissance before offering battle. But there was no gainsaying the eagerness of Ferrantino, who had persuaded himself that 'fortune favours the brave',[1] and when the French reached the valley, they found the Aragonese drawn up in battle order behind the little stream which flowed through its midst.

In the Granadine war the Spanish horse had learnt the Parthian tactics of the Moors, whose favourite device was to lure the enemy on by a feint retreat and then suddenly to turn and rend him in the careless confusion of his apparent success. These tactics Gonsalvo's men now employed against the French, but with disastrous effects upon the morale of allies who were unfamiliar with the manœuvre, and failed to grasp its character. Attacking the French cavalry as it emerged from the passage of the stream, the Spanish *genétaires* began by producing some confusion in d'Aubigny's ranks; but aware of their impotence to resist the mailed *gendarmerie*, when it should once have re-formed, they then drew off in rapid retreat, to await another opportunity of annoying the foe. Witnessing the retirement, and not comprehending its significance, the Calabrian militia concluded that the battle was already lost, and before Ferrantino could explain what had happened, the bulk of his forces was fleeing wildly for shelter, with the French in hot pursuit. Himself involved in the rout which he tried vainly to stem, Ferrantino owed his safety to the action of a noble youth in his company, who drew him from the *mêlée* in which his horse had fallen under him, mounted him on his own steed, and then coolly turned to encounter the doom which his chivalrous devotion had made his own inevitable portion. Thus rescued by the heroism of Giovanni d'Altavilla, Ferrantino fled to Reggio, where he embarked hastily in one of the vessels in the port, and made sail for Sicily. Gonsalvo and his Spaniards also contrived to effect a retreat upon Reggio, owing their escape to the slackness of the French pursuit—a slackness

[1] Paolo Giovio, *Istorie*, vol. i, p. 110.

due in the main to the state of health of the French commander, who had been borne to the field on a litter, and had been obliged to quit the saddle as soon as the day was won. But if d'Aubigny's apathy was thus excusable, its results were none the less unfortunate, for he had nothing but a barren victory to his credit, when he might have captured Ferrantino, destroyed the Spaniards, and dealt a knock-out blow to the cause of Aragon.

The consequences of d'Aubigny's omission were not long in manifesting themselves. With the same adventurous spirit which had brought him to disaster at Seminara, Ferrantino had no sooner escaped from the scene of his defeat than he had resolved to strike another blow for the recovery of his throne. His plan was to make instantly for his capital, where he hoped that he might yet profit by the favourable disposition of its people, if he could show himself before the news of his reverse in Calabria should have damped their enthusiasm. Picking up the Spanish armada which lay at anchor at Messina, and throwing into it the few troops at his command, he made sail for Naples, and appeared off that place on the 6th of July, the very day upon which, on the banks of the distant Taro, his rival was engaged in his perilous encounter with the army of the League. With nothing but a handful of men to oppose to Montpensier's garrison, which was 6,000 strong, he relied solely upon the popular opinion in his favour; nor did he rely in vain. As soon as he appeared off the coast, Salerno, Amalfi, and Cava declared in his favour. As he approached the capital, Montpensier marched out with nearly all his men to prevent a landing. No sooner were the French beyond the walls than the Neapolitans seized their chance, and, rushing to arms, closed the gates against Montpensier, and set to work to hunt down his adherents in the town. Afraid to advance against Ferrantino with a rebellious city behind him, and equally afraid to return to the attack of Naples with the threat of an Aragonese landing in his rear, Montpensier retreated by a hilly road which made the circuit of the city, that he might re-enter it by the gate near the Castel Nuovo which his men still controlled. While he did so, Ferrantino entered the capital amid scenes of enthusiasm.

Montpensier regained the castles only to find that he was straitly besieged in them with many men and few provisions. Every egress on shore was blocked by the Neapolitans, whilst the sea was patrolled by Ferrantino's vessels. A French fleet, organized at Nice by Perron de Baschi, which reached the neighbourhood of Gaeta, might have been expected to do something for Montpensier; but its officers were without naval experience, and when within striking distance of the enemy, they drew off to Leghorn, where the crews deserted. If Montpensier was to be relieved, the succour must come from his colleagues in the southern provinces, whom he had acquainted with his unhappy situation. D'Aubigny did his best to respond to the appeal. Containing Gonsalvo in Reggio, he placed all his available men at the disposal of Précy, who in September marched from the Basilicate, to go to the aid of the beleaguered Viceroy. At Eboli, some twenty miles from Salerno, Précy found across his path an Aragonese army of 12,000 men. His own numbers were no more than 3,000, and of these a third was composed of unreliable Italian levies, which had joined his standard under the Prince of Bisignano and other Angevin lords. But if little reliance could be placed in these troops, it was equally certain that the raw levies of the enemy would give but a poor account of themselves, if resolutely attacked by the French cavalry and the Swiss foot, and Précy moved boldly forward across the stream which separated him from the enemy position (2nd October). Confident in their immense numerical superiority, the Aragonese leaders spread out their men, meaning to envelop their adventurous assailants, and to capture the entire force, when it should have suffered the anticipated defeat. But here, as so often in the course of the prolonged operations in Naples, the French were enabled by their immense superiority in all the military arts to make up for the paucity of their numbers and the inadequacy of their equipment. Harassed by Précy's cavalry, and impotent against the solid phalanx of the Swiss, the Aragonese forces took to flight, leaving the field strewn with their dead.

Meanwhile in the Neapolitan castles, which had been besieged for three months, Montpensier was being pressed

by a growing dearth of food to devise some means of putting an end to an intolerable situation. Ignorant of Précy's movements, since the Neapolitans intercepted his messengers, he knew nothing of the engagement at Eboli, and saw no prospect of relief. On 4th October, two days after Précy's victory, he agreed with Ferrantino to a truce for two months, undertaking that, if not relieved within that period, he would at its expiration evacuate Naples and return to France with all his troops. Précy, advancing from Eboli, was met by the crushing news of this inopportune capitulation. At Sarno he encountered another Aragonese army under Prospero Colonna, who in his jealousy of Charles' efforts to win over the Orsini had deserted the French cause, carrying over to the other camp his own family and vassals and all the troops and castles which had been entrusted by Charles to his hands. Deprived by the truce of the prospect of co-operation with the strong French forces under Montpensier, and persuaded that his own little army must be overtaken by disaster should it attempt to do more, Précy on 10th October turned his back on Naples, abandoning the provisions, cattle, and guns which he had been bringing to his chief's relief. His retreat settled the fate of the Neapolitan castles. On 27th October Ferrantino permitted his fleet to put to sea, thinking, no doubt, that under the terms of the French capitulation he need no longer maintain a close watch over the harbour of Naples. In that harbour the French had ships enough to carry their guns and booty and 2,500 of their troops, and Montpensier profited by the opportunity to slip away to Salerno, where he might yet contrive to strike a blow in his master's cause. For some weeks longer the garrisons which he had left behind managed to keep the French flag flying over the castles; but on 8th December the Castel Nuovo could hold out no longer, and with the surrender of the Castel dell' Uovo on 17th February 1496, the whole of the capital was restored to the possession of its Aragonese sovereign.

Occurrences so damaging to French prestige swelled the flowing tide of Neapolitan insurrection, and far and wide throughout the kingdom 'the standard of Charles VIII was thrown down as easily as it had been raised'. Capua, Aversa, and several less important towns followed the

example of the capital. In the Abruzzi, where Aquila had already been lost, Ortona, Chieti, and Sulmona were captured by the Aragonese; in Apulia the French retained only a precarious foothold here and there; in the Principate and the Terra di Lavoro their position was no better; and in Calabria the strong Aragonese leanings of the province drew encouragement from the inactivity of d'Aubigny, whose energy had been undermined by the enervating climate of the south and the insidious attacks of disease.[1] Charles had not been gone a year when it became plain that nothing short of a miracle could save his conquest—the twofold miracle of adequate financial assistance from a King who had no resources, and of effective naval intervention by a country which did not possess, and could not win, the command of the sea.

'Sire,' wrote a French gentleman from Naples in April 1496,[2] 'King Ferrantino is receiving help in money and in men from the Pope and the Venetians; I am informed on credible authority that the Duke of Milan has given him 20,000 ducats; and he is raising money in this kingdom. Should we levy contributions on the places here which are in your interest, we should put them against you, and it is therefore essential that you should send money with which to pay the Swiss and the gunners and to meet other ordinary and extraordinary warlike expenditure. The *gens d'armes* have not received a day's pay since you left the country. For this reason M. de Montpensier and other captains are constrained to sanction the forcible taking of provisions without payment; but our cause is greatly injured thereby, and the result is that not a single place will acknowledge you except under compulsion.

'Sire, your kingdom of Sicily cannot be conquered or kept unless you send us with all speed a navy more powerful than that of your Aragonese, Venetian, and other enemies. With such a navy, when it comes, I think that, God willing, we could easily reduce the kingdom into your obedience. Above all else, you should strive to win over the Genoese to your side, for in this matter they can aid and serve you as can none else.' Perhaps it was a recollection of this letter

[1] Delaborde, *L'Expédition de Charles VIII en Italie*, p. 659.
[2] Mlle Dupont's ed. of Commynes, vol. iii, p. 437.

which inspired the Cardinal of Saint-Malo to tell Charles in July that 'the recovery of Genoa is the kernel of your affair: with Genoa yours, all would be at your command; without it the sea affair is difficult or impossible.' [1]

But whilst things were not well with the French, they were little better with the other side. Without money Ferrantino could not raise troops; yet he had exhausted the financial resources with which he had been provided, and had little prospect of receiving more help. The difficulties of the two sides were so similar, and their forces so evenly matched, that the contest for the possession of Naples seemed likely to be decided in favour of the side which should first succeed in enlisting external aid. In this dilemma Ferrantino determined to accept help upon the terms offered by Venice, and on 21st January 1496 signed a pact with the Signory for placing his kingdom under the protection of the Republic of St. Mark. The Signory agreed that the fleet which had lately taken Monopoli should remain in Neapolitan waters, promised to aid Ferrantino on land with 700 men-at-arms and 6,000 foot, and undertook to provide a cash advance of 10,000 ducats with which he could meet his most pressing calls. With characteristic caution Venice stipulated that her expenditure in Ferrantino's interest should not exceed a total of 200,000 ducats, and with not less characteristic astuteness she bargained that repayment should be secured upon Brindisi, Otranto, and Trani, which were to be handed over in pledge. Those places brought in between them a revenue of 28,000 ducats a year, and—what was more important—the possession of three Apulian harbours immensely strengthened the maritime position of the Republic in the Adriatic.

Conformably with the engagements into which they had entered, the Signory sent orders to Bernardo Contarini, the Provveditore of the Stradiots at Ravenna, to get ready to go to Naples, detailed for the same service the troops under Francesco Grasso, Captain of the citadel at Verona, and decided that the conduct of operations in the Regno should be entrusted to their Captain-General, the Marquis of Mantua. Had these forces been able to take the field

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 463.

at once, the outlook for the French would have been black indeed; but two months were spent in preparation, and during that time two pieces of good fortune befell Charles' harassed Viceroy. Early in the year a French squadron appeared off Gaeta; the blockading vessels, battered by long service afloat, were in no condition to oppose its entrance; and a reinforcement of 2,000 men, largely Swiss, was put ashore, together with useful supplies. About the same time Virginio Orsini decided to accept the offers which the French had made him, and, collecting his own forces and those of the Vitelli, began to march on Naples with the intention of effecting a junction with Montpensier.

As the result of this accession of strength the French were the first to secure the temporary advantage which Ferrantino had hoped to win by his bargain with Venice, and in February 1496 the agent of the Signory was startled into fervent expostulation. 'In view of the numerous infirmities of this body politic,' he told his employers, 'it is not merely necessary that remedies should be applied quickly, but it is even doubtful whether they can now be efficacious, for the ills have become much more grave than they were when the medicine was prepared. Now, if ever, is promptness vital, for every moment the sickness grows worse.' Two days later he wrote again in the same emphatic strain. 'The condition of the kingdom is much injured by the coming of Signor Virginio into the Abruzzi with a powerful army; the enemy have crossed the Garigliano, and many places have rebelled. In consequence of this and of the state of affairs at Taranto all is in commotion, and every day there is some fresh scare. If aid come not quickly, I fear lest some great calamity happen, for the strength and activity of the enemy are much increased, nearly the whole of the Baronage is in rebellion, and the people go over with alacrity to the side which they see daily reinforced. Many think that no help is ever coming from us, for they contrast the great hopes which have been raised with the continuing lack of all certain news. It is of the first importance that no time should be lost.' [1]

Montpensier's plan, when he escaped to Salerno, was to collect the French troops scattered about the country, and

[1] Sanuto, *I Diarii*, vol. i, pp. 43, 45.

then to effect a junction with Précy, who had gone into winter-quarters at Ariano. At the end of November 1495 he had taken San Severino, which barred the Ariano road, and his prospects had since been greatly improved by the arrival of the Orsini and Vitelli bands, which changed the whole aspect of affairs in the Abruzzi, where the French fortunes were at a specially low ebb. In a few weeks the new-comers recovered Teramo, which had rebelled, captured and sacked Giulianuova, and restored French authority throughout the province. At the same time the Prefect of Rome regained Monte Casino and carried into the Terra di Lavoro a guerrilla warfare which spread dismay through that sphere of Aragonese influence. Short of money and of men, and confined within the few fortresses which he had managed to win back, Ferrantino would be in an evil plight if the promised aid of Venice should not quickly come.

When at last, in April, the Marquis of Mantua and Bernardo Contarini reached Naples, their coming restored the equilibrium which Montpensier's recent reinforcements had destroyed. Perhaps even now the chances would still have been slightly in favour of the French but for their pecuniary destitution. Without money for purchasing supplies or paying his men, Montpensier found it difficult to provision his army and impossible to maintain discipline in its ranks; the Swiss were mutinous, the Italians disheartened, and the civilian population infuriated by the depredations of the unpaid soldiery. The loss of Camillo Vitelli, who fell in a skirmish, deprived the Viceroy of one of his best subordinates, and his unhappy relations with another, the brave and energetic, but rash and self-confident Précy, were the talk of the army, the demoralization of which they helped materially to augment.

One of the chief sources of revenue in the Regno was the tax, known as the *dogana delle pecore*, which it was customary to collect in the spring, when the flocks and herds migrated from their winter-quarters in Apulia to the cooler and richer pastures of the Abruzzi hills. A sum of 100,000 ducats might be looked for as the yield of the tax, and, as the Venetian Consul in Naples pointed out, the control of the district in which the tax was collected was rendered

peculiarly important to each side by the financial stringency which pressed with equal severity upon both. Hence it came about in the spring of 1496 that the French and the Aragonese began by a common impulse to concentrate their forces in the region which the migratory flocks must traverse. In April Ferrantino occupied Foggia with the largest force which he could collect, and was presently joined there by the Marquis of Mantua with his Venetian reinforcements and by Don Cesare of Aragon from Taranto. Troia and Lucera in the same locality were also held in the Aragonese interest by Fabrizio and Prospero Colonna. About the same time Montpensier moved on the Monte Sant' Angelo district, where he occupied Loreto, whilst one of his allies, Virginio Orsini, took up a position at San Severo in the Capitanate, and another, Marcino Savelli, led 100 men-at-arms into the district known as the Terra di Porcina. Montpensier's own force amounted to 1,100 men-at-arms, 4,400 light horse, and 6,000 Swiss, German, and Gascon foot, with ten squadrons of Italian infantry under the standards of the San Severino Princes.

The first success in the struggle for the possession of the *dogana* was won comfortably by Ferrantino, who moved out from Foggia at the head of 3,000 men, contained Orsini, repulsed Savelli, and with his light horse rounded up the flocks and herds. Montpensier attempted reprisals, but the sole result was to spread a confusion so hopeless that all prospect of levying the tax was extinguished. The main object of the French operations in Apulia was thus frustrated, and the perennial difficulties of supply being aggravated by the presence of so many troops in the same area, Montpensier decided to move off to another district, where provisions might be easier to come by. The enemy followed him closely enough to aggravate his victualling perplexities, but much too cautiously to give him a chance of forcing an engagement, for their game was now to prolong a state of desultory warfare which must daily become more embarrassing to the French. No news came from France, nor help, nor sign of help, in money or in men; the leaders had taken to quarrelling among themselves; the temper of their unpaid mercenaries was growing more and more mutinous; and their Italian allies were deserting,

some to defend their homes against Aragonese attack, and some in disgust at the insolence of the French, who treated with disdain their claim to consideration in the division of booty and supplies. Montpensier moved aimlessly from place to place, his footsteps dogged by a persistent but elusive foe. In June, becoming desperate, he broke up his camp by night, and by a long forced march put twenty-five miles between himself and Ferrantino before his retreat was discovered. His objective was Venosa, a place important by its own strength and as the key to a region which abounded in food. He might have reached it without difficulty, but stopped to capture Atella, a little town on the borders of the Basilicate, which, when won, would be of no particular value. The delay cost him dear, for the enemy were following hot on his heels, and appeared before Atella almost at the moment when he at last succeeded in forcing his way into the town.

Shut up in Atella with guns and baggage, which they were loath to abandon but could not remove in the face of the enemy, the French were in an awkward situation, and that situation would become critical should Gonsalvo be able to respond to the urgent summons which Ferrantino had sent to him, begging him to hasten with every man he could muster to the destruction of Montpensier. The Spanish general had spent the winter in recovering Calabria for Aragon, and, when Ferrantino's message reached him, was encamped in the north of the province. If he were to leave it, he would run a risk of losing all the fruits of his hard-won victories, but by remaining he might sacrifice a splendid chance of giving the *coup de grâce* to the French cause. He decided to go, but before doing so to preserve his supremacy in Calabria by dealing some blow that would paralyse the enemy during his temporary absence. He knew that the Angevin lords were collecting their men at a place called Laino on the Lao river. He found out that they were negligently careless in the fancied security of their numbers and position. Indifference to the enemy was a luxury in which none could indulge with impunity when within striking distance of the energetic and resourceful Great Captain. Starting out from his camp at dusk, Gonsalvo made his way in the darkness across the inter-

vening mountains, shortly before dawn reached Laino, where no sentinels were posted, sent his infantry to occupy the bridge which connected the village with its fortress, himself crossed the river at the head of his cavalry, and was already master of the position before his presence was suspected by the unwary foe. Amerigo di San Severino, the Angevin leader, fell in a belated attempt at resistance, and twenty other lords were taken prisoners and sent off to the Neapolitan dungeons. Gonsalvo was free to go and join Ferrantino with the reassuring knowledge that some time must elapse before things could go seriously amiss in Upper Calabria.

The town of Atella lies some ten miles south of Melfi in a broad valley, nearly encircled by lofty hills. A little river, a tributary of the Ofanto, flows past its walls, and in the fifteenth century was used to turn the mills upon which Atella depended for grinding its corn. Gonsalvo, as soon as he had surveyed the ground, saw that the destruction of these mills ought to be made the primary object of the army of investment. Montpensier had placed a guard over them, but it was composed of troops exhausted by hardships and demoralized by reverses. At the first threat of attack by Gonsalvo's men they broke and fled, leaving the mills to be razed by the Spaniards. The loss was the more serious in that the beleaguered army had exhausted its stocks of fresh meat and wine. Foraging was impossible, water was scarce, and reinforcements and supplies coming from Venosa were intercepted by the Stradiots.

The Venetian ambassador sent home reports in which the progress of the siege may be followed.

'June 23rd. The enemy are in a trap, and cannot get away, unless it be by night, in which case they must leave their guns. Unlike ourselves, they are suffering from a great want of food, and have neither bread nor wine, whilst the Stradiots capture all supplies that come by road. It cannot last long; Gonsalvo is expected with substantial forces; and then the enemy will be in our power.

'July 4th. An officer captured to-day says that they have food for a fortnight only, and that their sole hope is in the succour they expect from France.

'July 14th. Our guns have been bombarding Atella;

we have taken a church near the walls; and we have destroyed the enemy's one remaining mill, so that he must suffer disastrously. He is short of supplies for men and horses; the men are eating roasted grain, and the horses are fed on leaves and grass. On three successive days the Swiss, hopeless, desperate, and unpaid, have all but deserted, and their captain has promised that he will enter the service of the King of Naples, if within six days Montpensier does not pay the wages that are due. . . . Montpensier has begun to talk of a truce for arranging terms. . . . Our guns are doing much damage to the town.

'July 18th. The enemy are eating leaves and horse-flesh, and many of them are ill. Virginio Orsini is said to have vowed to Montpensier that he will make terms with Ferrantino, if not relieved within four days. Whereupon Montpensier sent to Ferrantino to say that he wished for an interview with his relative, the Marquis of Mantua, with a view to an accord.

'July 20th. Montpensier has agreed to surrender, unless within a month there should come from France a force adequate to his relief. Six hostages are to be given, two French, one German, one Swiss, and two Italian, namely, Paolo Orsini and Paolo Vitelli. Ferrantino is to supply food from day to day, and both sides are to suspend hostilities. The French undertake that, if not relieved within the term, they will leave Atella and make over to Ferrantino that place and all other places and fortresses. Notice of the capitulation is to be given immediately by Montpensier to all the French in the Abruzzi, at Taranto, in Calabria, at Gaeta, and elsewhere, and he is to do his best to induce all of them to swear observance of the pact: should any refuse to do so, he is to inform Ferrantino, so that he may proceed against them. Montpensier himself, with his company in Atella, is to take ship at a spot to be designated by Ferrantino, and is to go direct to Provence without setting foot ashore at any place in Italy.' [1]

Unable to pay for the food which Ferrantino had promised to supply, and without the slightest hope of relief, Montpensier a few days later concluded a supplemental

[1] Sanuto, *I Diarii*, vol. i, pp. 228–30 and 235–45. The terms of the capitulation are given in full at pp. 253–60.

agreement, by which the terms of the original capitulation were sensibly modified. It was now agreed that Ferrantino should supply a loan of 10,000 ducats conditionally upon an immediate evacuation of Atella, and on 31st July the French marched out of the place *en route* for Castellamare, which Ferrantino had designated as their place of embarkation. By the time they reached the coast difficulties had arisen over the interpretation of the contract of capitulation. In Ferrantino's construction of that document he was entitled to demand the complete evacuation of the kingdom. Montpensier, however, maintained that he could not have undertaken to surrender places which he did not control; he had agreed to nothing more than the evacuation of the districts for which he was personally responsible; and French officers in independent commands entrusted to them directly by the King could not be expected to surrender at the bidding of a commander to whom they were not accountable. In the allegation that Montpensier had thus broken faith Ferrantino found a convenient pretext for setting at naught his own engagements. Virginio Orsini and Paolo Vitelli, who should have been permitted to leave Naples with the French, were thrown into the dungeons of the Castel Nuovo, where Virginio's mysterious death added yet another item to the tale of dark secrets that shed their gloom over those ill-famed gaols. Montpensier and his comrades in arms were left to languish on the shores of the Bay of Naples in vain expectation of the ships that were to carry them back to France. They had reached the malarial coast at the most trying season of the year, and among the emaciated survivors of long and arduous campaigns a deadly epidemic soon began its fell work. Refusing the entreaties of his brother-in-law, the Marquis of Mantua, who begged him to retire to a place of safety, the French Viceroy stuck to his men, and on 9th November succumbed to the disease which was striking them down. Not many of his soldiers were left to admire his heroism or to bewail his loss. Of the five thousand men who had marched out of Atella under a promise of repatriation no more than a few hundreds were destined to regain the land of their birth.

Ferrantino did not live to enjoy his triumph, for in the

hour of success he was struck down by the pestilence which was sweeping away the captive French. He died childless, and was succeeded by his uncle, Federigo, the fifth sovereign within the space of three years to assume the Neapolitan Crown. The accession of this Prince hastened on the end of the contest for the possession of that Crown, for the Angevin lords who had rebelled against the blood-stained House of Aragon believed that they might safely acknowledge the authority of the gentle, loyal, and chivalrous Federigo, and respect for the character of the new ruler completed the work which French arrogance and licence had begun. The Prince of Bisignano had already come to terms, and in October Federigo received the submission of the Prince of Salerno, the chief instigator of the Angevin revolt. The reduction of the few isolated French garrisons which were still scattered over the country was then but a question of time. Fabrizio Colonna was sent to subdue the Abruzzi. Gonsalvo returned to Calabria, where d'Aubigny was constrained to accept terms under which he, too, would evacuate the kingdom. In November Prospero Colonna compelled the surrender of Gaeta; and when on 18th January 1497 Taranto threw open its gates, the French flag ceased to fly within the confines of the Regno.

Thus Naples was lost, and the reader will ask what Charles VIII had been doing during the progress of events which were so damaging to his reputation. Is it true, as has often been said, that his interest in the affairs of Italy evaporated as soon as he left that country, and that, once back in France, he returned to his former life of pleasure—of jousts and tournaments and amorous intrigues—in callous indifference to the fate of the brave men who were spending themselves in gallant efforts to preserve his conquests? It would be easier to answer that question convincingly if we knew more of his activities in France during the months that followed his departure from Italy. So long as he had remained in that country, he had lived and moved in the bright light which Italian diplomatists, historians, diarists, and chroniclers shed upon the story of their land; but as he recrosses the Alps he recedes into a gloom which seems but the deeper for the feeble beams that cast a fitful flicker

here and there. Perhaps with a little patience we may rescue from the darkness enough to show that the King was not wholly oblivious of the need to refurbish the tarnished brightness of his arms, and that he accomplished as much as was allowed by his naval weakness, his pecuniary embarrassment, and the restrictions imposed upon him by the delicacy of his international relationships.

The speedy return of the French to Italy was confidently expected by the statesmen of that country, whose political information was immeasurably the best in Europe, and who would spare no pains to obtain accurate intelligence upon a matter of such vital importance to themselves. Speculations upon the absorbing theme fill the diplomatic correspondence, and recur constantly in the pages in which Sanuto recorded the events, rumours, and opinions of the passing days. Italy did not forget the place which the King of France had assigned to the relief of Naples in framing the treaty of Vercelli; she believed that schemes for effecting that relief were uppermost in his mind; and it was her conviction that, if in fact little or nothing should come of them, the result would be due rather to Charles' lack of power than to his lack of will. The great impediment was the scarcity of money. Effectually to relieve Naples, Charles required to build a fleet, to enroll a new army, and to distribute with an unsparing hand the largesses which alone could unsheathe the swords of Italian *condottieri*. But the Italian adventure had never ceased to be profoundly unpopular in France, and the country which had grudged money when its sovereign was in the field was not likely to prove more generous when that sovereign was safely home again and it was merely a question of pulling the Royal chestnuts out of the Neapolitan fire. Charles had with difficulty paid off the Swiss who had marched to the relief of Novara, and his coffers were empty when he received just afterwards the news of Montpensier's first capitulation in Naples. His embarrassment is revealed by the anxious appeal which he then addressed to the Duke of Bourbon.[1] 'Since it is necessary to send help promptly to my cousin of Montpensier, who is in the Castel Nuovo at Naples, I beg that you will summon the revenue officials

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, pp. 313–15.

and consult with them how best and quickest to raise the 70,000 francs necessary for that service and to equip the fleet which must be sent there before 6th December. Otherwise my said cousin of Montpensier must abandon all, whereas, if the said help be forthcoming quickly, and it is no great matter, their safety will be secured and the whole kingdom regained. I pray you, therefore, to attend to the business so that I may be promptly served and aided with the said sum. . . . We must make such haste to dispatch the said fleet that it may reach the Castel Nuovo before the 6th of December; else they will be constrained to surrender it, and thereto have bound themselves by hostages.'

The pecuniary support which his own subjects refused to him Charles hoped for a moment to gain from his Florentine allies. Always intent upon the recovery of Pisa, Florence had stood aloof from the League, and after Fornovo she thought the moment opportune to claim the reward of her fidelity to the King of France. When Charles reached Asti, the ambassadors of the Republic waited upon him. As on previous occasions, the Florentine demand was resisted by the war party under the Count of Ligny, but those young hotheads could oppose no sound argument to the contention of Briçonnet that something must be done to gratify the Florentines, if money and men were to be secured for the relief of Naples. Upon Florence undertaking to pay the balance of 30,000 ducats still due under her previous engagements, to lend 70,000 ducats more, and to provide 250 men-at-arms for service in the Regno, Charles consented that the citadel of Pisa should be restored to Florentine hands. The bargain struck, orders for its performance were sent out, and then it was seen that the King had not reckoned with the attitude of his own troops, who had been left behind under d'Entragues to guard the disputed fortress. Predisposed from the first in favour of the rebellious city, these troops had now been living for many months in intimate association with its people; many of the officers had married Pisan ladies; and d'Entragues himself was desperately in love with the beautiful daughter of Signor Luca del Lante. One and all were determined that no action of theirs should facilitate the re-establishment of Florentine authority. Their views

were known to Ligny and his friends. In the moment when Charles was undertaking his new obligations to the Florentines Ligny comforted the Pisan representative with the assurance that d'Entragues was 'very faithful, and would not betray them for all the gold in the world, nor give up the fortress on any orders whatsoever'.[1] Strange as it seemed, the assumption of Ligny was correct. When the troops came to claim the surrender of the citadel under the terms of Charles' promise, d'Entragues actually turned his guns upon them, and on New Year's Day, 1496, the citadel was made over by him to the Pisan authorities. The example was followed in the other Tuscan fortresses, their Governors bargaining for their surrender to the Governments of Genoa and Lucca.

In these events, which seemed to destroy the last hope of maintaining the land communications with Naples, Charles might have found a pretext for inaction. The result, however, was to spur him to further effort, and in February 1496 the Marquis of Mantua was told by a correspondent in Lyons that a fresh expedition was being seriously contemplated. The Duke of Orleans was to cross the Alps at the head of 1,200 lances; 12,000 Swiss were to join him at Asti; great naval preparations were in progress in Provence; the Cardinal of Saint-Malo was expected somehow to provide the necessary cash; and an attack on Genoa was confidently expected.[2] There was great alarm in Milan and Venice, where it was agreed to patch up the differences resulting from the Peace of Vercelli, and to send a joint invitation to the Emperor to come into Italy. When the invitation had been given and accepted, the news of Atella broke off French preparations, and relieved the Emperor's allies of their immediate fears. Now that it was too late, they regretted the invitation to Maximilian, whose presence would be tolerable only if he should come as the policeman of the peninsula. The Emperor therefore received but a cold welcome, and retired in disgust after an intervention of which the sole result had been to inspire Italy with a still deeper contempt for the Imperial authority.

[1] *Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, vol. xvi, p. 47.
[2] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 354 n.

That would have been no great matter if Italy had heard the last of Charles VIII; but in supposing that the loss of Naples would finally disenchant that monarch of his Italian ambitions the crafty rulers of Venice and Milan had made a mistake. A new project had already taken shape in Charles' mind, his intention now being to take in hand the conquest of the Milanese, which he regarded as a sure prelude to the recovery of Genoa and the reconquest of Naples. Trivulzio was still at Asti; the Duke of Ferrara, who still hoped to get back the Polesine, the Marquis of Mantua, who had fallen out with his Venetian paymasters, and Charles' old confederates, the Orsini and Vitelli, were all ready to declare for him; Florence undertook to make a diversion in the Lunigiana; and Cardinal della Rovere felt sure of stirring up a rebellion in the Genoese Riviera as soon as the galleys from Marseilles should appear off the coast.

The opening phases of the campaign, as Trivulzio advanced from Asti, showed something of the rottenness of the Sforza power. A strong position at Novi, covering important magazines, was abandoned without a blow by Ludovic's demoralized troops. His unpopularity with the civilian population was revealed by the action of subjects who shut their gates against his generals and opened them to the invader. But, just as it seemed certain of success, the French offensive broke down before the vigorous measures of the Venetians. Venice did not love Ludovic, but she had no wish to see a great military power established in the Milanese, and strained every nerve to save her ally. Her ships hastened to Genoa, kept off the French galleys, and stopped della Rovere's attack. Her cavalry was hurried into the Milanese; 2,000 Germans were hired from Maximilian; and Trivulzio, when on the eve of capturing the city of Alessandria, was compelled to fall back. It had, perhaps, been bad strategy on the part of the French to attempt two schemes instead of concentrating upon one of them. But the chief cause of their failure was to be sought elsewhere. The King had intended that the invasion of the Milanese should be conducted by the Duke of Orleans, and the unpopularity of the Sforza ruler justified extravagant expectations of what might happen when the Visconti claimant should appear in the field.

When the time for departure came, however, the French Duke refused to move. The little Dauphin had died; the King seemed to be in uncertain health; and Orleans was the heir. In case some sudden stroke should summon him to ascend the throne, he did not care to be too far away.

From the local aspects of Charles VIII's Italian policy I turn now to its wider consequences in the sphere of international relationships, glancing first at the activities of the King of Spain since the time when we last heard of him. The menace of Spanish hostility had hung like a cloud over Charles' southern frontier, and the concentration of Spanish troops on the Pyrenean border showed that there were eventualities in which Ferdinand might undertake something more serious than the raids and skirmishes which had marked the springs and summers of 1495 and 1496 in that region. If he had not yet done more, it was because he still clung to the hope that his enemy might be humbled by the agency of other powers, and it was largely to promote that development that he himself had struck a threatening attitude on the Pyrenean border. His chief hope was in Maximilian. No doubt, as he said, the Emperor lacked the means of raising so powerful an army as might be wished; but, as he adroitly added, when commanded by His Majesty in person, a very small force marshalled on the frontiers of Burgundy or Champagne would suffice, especially should France be invaded at other points by Spain and England.[1] Maximilian himself had been playing with some such notion. In the preceding August he had 'considered it certain that he should induce the sovereigns of Spain and the Kings of England and Scotland to move against France; that the Duke of Lorraine was going into Provence to attack the King, and would easily obtain that province, as it belonged to him *de jure*; and that he, Maximilian, would be there in person with the whole host, so that within a year he should find himself at the gates of Paris, and the King of France would have to give *carte blanche*'.[2] It was an attractive programme, but there was one small hitch. 'His Royal Majesty has all ready for an attack in Burgundy; nothing

[1] *Calendar of State Papers, Venice*, vol. i, p. 239.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 222.

remains but to get the money he has asked for; without that there will be nothing doing, for he himself is penniless.' [1]

A success very damaging to France was secured by Spanish diplomacy when on 18th July 1496 the King of England was induced to join the League of Venice. After the treaty of Étaples the relations between France and England had been cordial, and Henry, as we have seen, had begun by declining to join the coalition. But he had not liked the Neapolitan adventure, which jeopardized the Étaples indemnity and threatened to make an unwelcome addition to French power and prestige. When Charles had sent to tell him of his designs on Naples, he had replied that he 'would think himself too happy if he could be the means of pacifying the difference'; [2] but Charles was on the eve of departure, and ignored the offer of mediation. The triumphal progress of French arms had been watched in England with little satisfaction. Even as early as 1494 it was the conviction of one of Henry's agents that 'his King would take the success of the King of France in Italy as causing him more displeasure than almost anything, and in order to put a stop to any such thing, if others did not resist it, he would like to oppose him with all the forces he possessed'.[3] In May 1496, when the Milanese envoy at the Imperial Court spoke of his fear of 'the power of the French to satiate their inordinate and dishonest appetite to subjugate all Christendom', he was assured by Henry's representative that 'in England they knew too well the depraved and perfidious methods of the French'; [4] and an acute observer of English politics thought it safe to assume that, though the general trend of Henry's policy was in favour of the maintenance of peace with France, yet, 'if he saw her up to her neck in the water, he would put his foot on her head to drown her'.[5]

Warmly supported by Ludovic and the Pope, the Spanish sovereigns spared no pains to draw England into the League. The moral effect of detaching from France her one friend

[1] F. Calvi, *Bianca Maria Sforza*, p. 122.
[2] J. Gairdner, *Letters and Papers . . . Richard III and Henry VII*, vol. ii, p. 295.
[3] *Calendar of State Papers, Milan*, vol. i, p. 292.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 296.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 340.

among the powers could not fail to be considerable, and if a threat of English hostility were added to his existing dangers, Charles VIII could scarcely venture to embark upon any serious operations in Italy. As a first step towards Henry's conversion Ferdinand set out to convince him that in the differences between himself and Charles Spain had behaved with perfect propriety and France had acted throughout in a spirit of wanton aggression. This was attempted in a long memoir of 20th July 1495, in which the French King's conduct in Italy was grossly misrepresented, and then vigorously condemned; and Henry was begged to 'take example, learn what the acts of the King of France are, and see what it will be convenient for him to do'.[1]

Henry's conclusion was that it would be convenient for him to join the League. The terms offered him were more favourable than anything he could hope to obtain from Charles, especially when, on the one hand, he was told that 'he might join the League without committing himself to fight France or to subsidize his allies', and when, on the other hand, the indemnity which formed the chief attraction of the French alliance was falling into arrear. Another and not unwelcome result would be the effect upon Maximilian, who had been making himself troublesome in the matter of Perkin Warbeck, and had shown a marked disinclination to agree to Henry's admission to the League. As an Italian envoy told his master, Maximilian had 'always made difficulties about his admission, owing to his feeling for Richard, the son of King Edward, who is under his protection; and maintaining that Henry will never abide by one of his promises, he keeps on getting the ratification put off'.[2] But Spanish pressure overcame his reluctance, and the result so ardently desired by Ferdinand was at length achieved.

Henry had been told that he might join the League without becoming a belligerent, but it would be all to the good if he could be stirred up to undertake hostilities, and his admission was only a few weeks old when Queen Isabella

[1] *Calendar of State Papers, Spain*, vol. i, pp. 63–5.

[2] Pandolfo Collenuccio to the Duke of Ferrara, 12th January 1497; P. Negri, 'Milano, Ferrara e Impero', in *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, series V, Anno XLIV, Part ii, p. 543.

instructed her ambassador in England to see what could be accomplished in that direction. 'If you see that such a proceeding be politic,' she told him, 'make very strong representations to the King of England respecting the King of France. To this end you shall say to him that he must already be aware that the intention of the King of France is nothing less than that of making himself lord of Italy. . . . If the King of France see that the King of England does not hold a neutral position, but that he has resolved to support the League, and to cross the Channel, and if he find that he has already entered into the League, and will make war immediately upon France, or at any rate command his subjects to make war, . . . then the King of France will certainly lose the hope by which perchance he is still inspired. It is certain that there is nothing which would sooner put a stop to his avarice, abate his pride, compel him to desire peace, and to be content with his own, leaving to others what is not his, than such a conviction as this. . . . There is no doubt whatever that the war, as it is now carried on, is waged with such moderation that nothing is done but what is necessary to prevent the King of France from setting the whole of Christendom on fire. If he, on the other hand, were to make war with the same moderation that we do, there would of a certainty be no war at all. But if the King of France will continue to carry things with a high hand, putting reason entirely out of sight, then it would of a certainty be doing him a good office to prevent him from further following the road to ruin which he is taking. To do this more effectually, it should be our endeavour to seek such expedients as would produce so desirable a result. One of these is to prevent him from carrying out his intentions. In order to do this, there does not appear to us to be a better course to take, or one calculated to be more advantageous at present, than that the King of England should make war upon him. For if he were to decide to do this (we of the League doing all that it is our intention to perform), it is very certain that we should then be able both speedily and easily to bring him to such a pass, that, for mercy's sake, he would be forced to see what hitherto he has not liked to comprehend. Thus, by means of the acts of the King of

England and the members of the League, the evil would cease, and peace be restored to Christendom without prejudice to any one; in addition to which it would benefit greatly the said King of England our cousin.'[1]

Finding in the King of England no inclination for a French war, and in the Emperor the inclination but not the capacity, the Catholic sovereigns determined to steal a march on their allies by approaching France with proposals for a general peace. Two Spanish envoys visited Amboise with this object in October 1496. Three months later the Seigneur de Clérieux paid a return visit to the Spanish Court, where he arranged for a prolongation of the existing truce, and whence he returned in the company of the Duke of Estrada, one of the envoys who had lately visited Charles VIII. On 25th February 1497 the Duke agreed in his master's name to a new truce to run from 5th March as between France and Spain and from 25th April as between France and all such members of the League as should signify their concurrence. That Ferdinand should propose and ratify such an arrangement without reference to his allies produced dismay in Italy; and they did not know the worst. In secret the Duke of Estrada had been whispering in Charles' ear that, as there were only two plausible claims to the Crown of Naples, namely, the Angevin claim, represented by Charles, and the Aragonese claim, represented by Ferdinand, the best solution would perhaps be a compact between France and Spain for the conquest of Naples at their joint expense and for their joint benefit; Spain would be satisfied with the part which adjoined Sicily, and France might have the rest. There were those at the French Court who believed this proposal to be fraudulent; and when a French embassy headed by du Bouchage went to Alcala de Henares in the autumn to discuss it and to arrange for a renewal of the expiring truce of 25th February, the Duke of Estrada was disavowed by Ferdinand, who denied that he had ever authorized any proposals for the partition of Naples. For the moment, therefore, the scheme was dropped, to be revived by Ferdinand at a more suitable time.

Ferdinand was not alone in his readiness to come to

[1] *Calendar of State Papers, Spain*, vol. i, pp. 125–7.

terms with France, for the Pope had quarrelled with the Venetians, Maximilian was furious about his reception in Italy and the ignominious failure in which it had involved him, and the Venetians themselves, who had never forgiven Ludovic for his conduct at Vercelli, would not be above seeking an advantage at the expense of Milan. Thus in the spring of 1498 'there were practices on all sides', and a strong probability that Charles might shortly return to the reconquest of Naples with the benedictions of those who had joined to snatch from him the fruits of his former victory. In the middle of March Ludovic was warned that the danger was real and imminent. It was true, said his correspondent, that the French lords disapproved of the enterprise, and talked of going in a body to Court, to lodge a protest; but it was doubtful if the King would listen to them, for 'he was constantly bent upon going back to Italy; he owned that he had made many mistakes there, and recounted them; but he thought that, if he could return once more and regain what he had lost, he could provide for the defence of his conquests better than he had done before'.[1]

Before the stage was set for this new experiment, there fell one of those sudden strokes which alter the course of history. In the spring of 1498 Charles was living at Amboise, his boyhood's home, superintending the works of reconstruction there which had been begun in his father's day, and in which he took a lively interest. The artists whom he had engaged in Italy were at work there, and he looked forward to the time when the treasures of art which he had brought back from their country could be worthily housed in a residence embellished by their taste and skill. To his great regret, he had been obliged to give up the idea of returning in person to Italy. His health was unsatisfactory, a constitution never strong having been undermined by frequent excess, and the doctors begged that he would take care of himself. Though he did not seem to pay much heed to their warnings, his conduct yet appeared to betray the influence of some secret premonition. 'The King', so Commynes tells us,[2] 'had freshly

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 378

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 379–80.

taken it into his head to desire holy living according to God's commandments, to set justice and the Church in order, and so to regulate his finances that in *tailles* (not counting the demesne) he should raise from his people no more than the 1,200,000 francs which the three Estates had voted him at Tours upon his accession. This sum he wanted as a grant for the defence of the realm, desiring himself to live upon the demesne revenues, as Kings used to do in the old days before him; and this he could well have done, for the yield of the demesne would be very great, if properly managed, amounting with *gabelles*, salt dépôts, and *aides* to more than a million francs. And, indeed, this would have been a great relief for the people, who to-day are paying in *taille* over two and a half million francs. He took great pains to reform abuses in the Benedictine and other Orders. He summoned holy men to his presence, and listened to their admonitions. He would have liked, if possible, to restrict every Bishop to one Bishopric (save that a Cardinal might have two), and to compel each to reside in his diocese; but it was no easy task to bring Churchmen into line. He distributed large sums in alms to the poor. A few days before his death, as I was told by that distinguished prelate, the Bishop of Angers, his confessor, he held a public audience, at which he received all comers, and especially the poor; . . . and although this audience did not result in anything far-reaching, yet at least it served as a warning to every one, particularly to his officers, some of whom he had suspended for extortion.'

In the beginning of April 1498, when Holy Week was approaching and he was preparing to touch for the King's evil, Charles went twice to confession. On the morning of Saturday, 7th April, Palm Sunday eve, he went out hunting, came in late, dined, and after dinner visited the Queen's apartments. A tennis court had been fitted up provisionally in the castle moat, and he asked the Queen to go down with him and watch a match which was to be played there that afternoon. The best place from which to watch the game was a dirty and derelict gallery, approached through a low door. The King forgot to stoop, and struck his head on the top of the doorway. He seemed

to suffer no ill effects, entered the gallery, and sat there, watching the play, and chatting with his courtiers. Suddenly—it was about two o'clock in the afternoon—he fell backwards and lay speechless. Doctors were hurriedly summoned, but he was beyond their skill. All through the afternoon and evening he lay motionless, stretched upon a little mattress on to which he had been lifted, and exposed to the curious gaze of all who cared to come and look upon the Royal agony. Save for a murmured prayer for mercy, he never spoke again, and soon after nightfall he was dead.[1]

Before we take our final leave of the young King who lay stark and cold in that dreary gallery at Amboise, we must pause for a moment to appraise the policy of expansion in Italy which his expedition to Naples had inaugurated, and to which his successors would cling tenaciously through more than half a century of good and evil fortune. Was that policy, as some historians have maintained, the logical and inevitable outcome of preceding events? Or was it, as others have asserted, a contradiction of French history, a rupture of secular traditions, a deviation as unnecessary as it was dangerous from the line of action which the monarchy had followed through many centuries of steady growth? There is eminent authority for the proposition that these questions raise a problem as serious as any which French history presents.[2]

Charles VIII, say his apologists, found himself upon the throne in an age of transition, when great political changes

[1] In England, at all events, Charles is usually spoken of as the King who died of hitting his head on a doorway, but it is very doubtful whether the accident in the doorway had anything to do with the subsequent tragedy. 'The immediate cause of death,' says the learned editor of Commynes' *Mémoires* (ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 381 n.), 'cannot be determined. The King had always been delicate, and certainly had not spared himself. Was he struck down by the terrible disease which so many Frenchmen had brought back from Italy? People have said so, and it is not impossible to attribute his sudden end to that cause. In any case, the notion of poison must be entirely eliminated.' Burchard (*Diarium*, ed. L. Thuasne, vol. ii, p. 456) understood that he had succumbed to an apoplectic seizure. The doctors said that 'the illness he died of was a syncope' (Rosmini, *Dell' Istoria . . . di Trivulzio*, vol. ii, p. 249).

[2] M. Henry Lemonnier, in Lavisse, *Histoire de France*, vol. v, part i, p. 13.

were passing over Europe. In England and in Spain, as in France itself, a strong national life was springing up, and it was inevitable that a new desire for national aggrandizement should be born of the new consciousness of national unity. First among the nations, France realized her strength, and the mediaeval spirit of adventure, which the miseries of the Hundred Years' War had crushed, awoke to a new activity as the inspiration and the instrument of a modern ambition. The long nightmare of English oppression was over; the fruitful period of repose had closed; and France arose rejuvenated and refreshed, free and strong at last. Somehow and somewhere she must find an outlet for her ebullient energies, and at her doors lay Italy, irresistibly tempting in the twofold attraction of its wealth and culture, its political disunion and military decay. The time had come when this rich and feeble country must assume a foreign yoke, and if France were to stand idly by, she would soon see herself forestalled by a more enterprising rival. The master of the peninsula would control its lucrative industry and commerce; he might command its agricultural and pastoral wealth; and its naval resources would be at his disposal. It would have been madness to have suffered Spain or some other power to appropriate those advantages, and in doing so to acquire an indisputable hegemony in the Mediterranean. For more than two hundred years French policy had steadily paved the way for an intervention in Italy, and it was reasonable to expect that, even if that intervention should not wholly succeed, it would at the worst result in the establishment of an equilibrium, whilst removing from the borders of France the scene of a conflict which events made inevitable.

That a King of France should interest himself in the affairs of Italy was no new thing, and what Charles VIII did was to 'resume with incomparable *éclat* the policy of intervention in Italy which was traditional with French Kings. . . . His expedition exemplified the continuity of the monarchy's traditional policy. Although in beginning the too famous Italian wars Charles is usually held responsible for a deviation in French foreign policy, it was really only quite superficially that his aims could be said, as they often have been, to conflict with antecedent tendencies.

If they seemed to do so, that was due to Charles' intentions. . . . For Charles the expedition to Italy was not an end in itself; it was designed merely as the prelude to a war against the Turk. . . . The presence of Charles in person at the head of the army gave a false impression of the expedition: it was above all a labour of diplomacy and politics, and in that labour the King, though his personal influence was more considerable than is always recognized, took only a mediocre part, whilst his chivalrous, warlike, and gallant air made him conspicuous, and, by touching the popular imagination and giving rise to a legend, obscured the serious and positive aims that underlay the expedition. . . . But stripped of the superficial characteristics which signalize it, the expedition is seen to be at bottom a continuation of the policy of Louis XI and Charles VII. Thus the antiquity and the persistence of a policy of French intervention in Italy is established. From Philippe le Bel to Charles VI, and from Charles VI to Charles VIII, there was no cessation in the development, perfecting, and organization of this policy, or—even if its propriety be disputed—in the growth of the claims which it created for itself in two centuries of existence. . . . The expedition of Charles VIII, with its air of knight-errantry and folly, was but an episode; and though its failure compromised the earlier work of French diplomacy, yet in principle it conformed to the genius of the national tradition. So deeply was this policy rooted in men's minds and thoughts that French influence survived even failure—the retreat from Naples, the battle of Fornovo, the truce of 25th February 1497: even when Charles VIII seemed to have abandoned his Italian projects altogether, the Italian powers still turned to him, and began vaguely to suggest new enterprises; the Pope carried on a secret correspondence with him, the Venetians thought of making an alliance with him against Milan, the Spanish sovereigns proposed to him concerted operations against Naples; it seemed in January 1498 that a new expedition was at hand; he would perhaps have had as allies the Pope, Maximilian, and Ferdinand of Aragon.—Thus the regular development of French political tradition and the unceasing action of its principles and processes of intervention had been such that even after a defeat the

King of France could bring back from Italy something more than unsubstantial honour. More even than actual facts, the persistence of Franco-Italian relations after Charles' retreat, however vague and feeble they might be, and the confused circulation of a French current in Italian life, reveal the strength of the principle. With a succession of examples filling two centuries of our history it is impossible to dispute the reality or legitimacy of this historical fact—the traditional existence of a policy tending by precise means and in a general interest to establish French domination in Italy.' [1]

Ability and erudition have done their best for CharlesVIII in this impressive defence, but they have not succeeded in stifling the voice of censure. Critics of the Royal policy contend that it is a misinterpretation of French history to discern in the previous relations between France and Italy any imperative call for intervention in the affairs of the peninsula. When put together, they say, the facts cited by Charles' apologists seem imposing, but it has to be remembered that those facts were spread out over a period of more than two centuries ; they were almost entirely the outcome of the action of Princes, in which the monarchy took little part ; and even if that had not been so, it would still have been impossible to deduce a continuity of policy from a succession of isolated efforts. It may be true, they go on, that the previous policy of the monarchy had made Charles VIII's invasion possible, but it is unsound to argue that it had made it inevitable. The aim of Charles' predecessors in Italy had been the acquisition, not of territorial possessions, but of moral influence, and ' the traditional policy of France was represented, not by Charles VIII, but by the party in his Court which endeavoured to prevent the enterprise, the party of which his wise sister, Anne de Beaujeu, was the inspiration and the soul '.[2] In the prosecution of his Angevin claims in Naples Charles sought his own glory at the expense of his country's true interests, and encouraged, if he did not compel, his successors to expend that country's resources in the costly pursuit of

[1] L. G. Pélissier, *Louis XII et Ludovic Sforza*, vol. i, pp. 43–56.

[2] J. Calmette, ' La France et l'Espagne à la Fin du Quinzième Siècle ', in the *Revue des Pyrénées*, vol. xvi (1904), p. 121.

a misconceived and unattainable ambition. The true Royal policy was consolidation and expansion in the French zone. The last great successes of this policy—the annexations of Burgundy and of Brittany—had promoted a coalition against France, and left a legacy of international complications. In the preservation and consolidation of recent acquisitions Charles had enough to occupy him at home. A great danger menaced France, and that danger Charles wantonly intensified. The dominant factor in the international situation of France was the settled resolve of the Hapsburgs to reopen the question of the Burgundian inheritance, and the paramount duty of the French sovereign was to insure his country against the consequences of Hapsburg hostility. By his unprovoked incursion into the Spanish sphere of influence in Italy Charles alarmed and enraged a power with whom he had no real cause of quarrel, drove Spain into the arms of his implacable enemy, and prepared the way for the birth of a colossus who was to bestride the world.[1]

'In the issue of the Hundred Years' War the Anglo-French conflict begun in 1066 had ended to the advantage of the Valois. Charles VII and Louis XI availed themselves of a recovered liberty, and turning their efforts from west to east won a footing in Artois, in Lorraine, in Franche-Comté, in Savoy, and in Provence. Fought out once again, the Lotharingian dispute had been won by the French monarchy against Charles the Bold. Suppose that on the morrow of the dismemberment of the Burgundies France had applied all her force on the north and east, had devoted herself obstinately and exclusively to the conquest of the intermediate lands; doubtless she would have encountered resistance, but it would always have been feeble. Charles VIII did not follow his father's policy. Instead of maintaining the Capetian tradition, so definitely resumed by his two predecessors, he involved himself in another direction—Italy. Ignoring or despising the lessons which the history of mediaeval Germany might have taught him, he gave up the substance for the shadow. To the realist policy of Louis XI he preferred the pursuit of

[1] H. Lemonnier, in Lavisse, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–16; J. Calmette, *op. cit.*; E. Fueter, *Geschichte des Europäischen Staatensystems von 1492–1559*.

a chimaera, just as the hero of a romance of chivalry would have done. Before him, as before certain of the great rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, rose suddenly " the Italian mirage, the folly of transalpine conquest, a geographical and political heresy, in which France squanders herself to no purpose, spreads hatred, and raises against herself the first coalitions. It is the capital fault of the monarchy ".' [1]

There is a passage in a famous book in which an English statesman who played his part in the events of those days passed judgement upon the Italian policy of the French Kings. Frenchmen, said the author of *Utopia*, beat their brains and search the very bottom of their wits, to discover by what craft they may hold Milan, regain fugitive Naples, conquer the Venetians, and bring all Italy under their jurisdiction, and then how to win the dominion of Flanders, Brabant, and all Burgundy. One counsels a league with the Venetians, procured with a part of the prey, which may afterwards be resumed. Others think best to hire the Germans, win with money the favour of the Swiss, or appease with gold the puissant power of the Emperor. Another advises peace with Aragon, and to that end the restoration of Navarre. All are agreed that an alliance must be had with England, and her weak and feeble friendship bound with most sure and strong bonds, and that, since the English, when called friends, are yet to be had in suspicion as enemies, therefore it would be well to have the Scots in readiness incontinent to set upon them, should they stir, and privily and secretly to make much of some banished peer of England, who claims the Crown, that through him they may hold a King in whom else they may have little trust. Not such, in Sir Thomas More's view, would be the counsel of a true friend of France. Were he to take part in the deliberations of a sovereign whom so many urged to war, he would will him to turn over the leaf and learn a new lesson, counselling him not to meddle with Italy, but to tarry still at home, and that the Kingdom of France alone is almost greater than that it may well be governed of one man: so that the King

[1] L. Leclère, *La Question d'Occident: Les Pays d'Entre-deux de 843 à 1921*, p. 39.

should not need to study how to get more. . . . Furthermore, if he should declare unto them, that all this busy preparance to war, whereby so many nations for the King's sake should be brought into a troublesome hurly-burly, when all his coffers were emptied, his treasures wasted, and his people destroyed, should at the length through some mischance be in vain and to none effect: and that therefore it were best for him to content himself with his own Kingdom of France, as his forefathers and predecessors did before him: to make much of it, to enrich it, and to make it as flourishing as he could, to endeavour himself to love his subjects, and again to be beloved of them, willingly to live with them, peaceably to govern them, and with other kingdoms not to meddle, seeing that which he hath already is even enough for him, yea and more than he can well turn him to.[1]

Charles VIII embarked upon his Neapolitan adventure at a critical moment in the history of his country and of Europe. The old world had changed; a new world was disclosed to view; and presently France would stand at the parting of the ways, free to choose between the sea and the land, between economic progress and militarist ambition, between the fruitful ways of colonial expansion and the perilous path of continental conquest. Who shall say how she might have chosen, had not her vision been distorted by the policy which her Kings pursued in Italy, by haunting memories of victory and defeat, and by the galling knowledge that in lands which once had owned her sway there was no longer any memorial of her being there, save only in her soldiers' graves? [2]

[1] Sir T. More, *Utopia*, Bk. 1.

[2] Cf. Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 15.

APPENDIX

BEHAVIOUR OF THE FRENCH IN ITALY

The reader who is curious in such matters may like to read in the originals some of the contemporary accounts of the behaviour of the French in Italy.

In Savoy, in the summer of 1494, the country, it was said, 'soffriva orribilmente di quel continuo trapassar di armati più disposti alle violenze e rapine, che alla disciplina ed all' ordine' (F. Gabotto, *Lo Stato Sabaudo da Amadeo VIII ad Emanuele Filiberto*, vol. ii, p. 510).

In Romagna in the autumn, 'già se intendeva commo questi Franciosi dove intravano o per forza o per amore, tagliavano a pezze ogni omo, infino a li putti, e le donne le svergognavano e menavano via a facenvane loro voglia' (Matarazzo, *Cronaca di Perugia*, in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. xvi, part ii, p. 13). Writing to Piero de' Medici on 21st October 1494, Bernardo Bibbiena told him that 'Mordano andò assacho [a sacco] et li Franzesi come scripsi stamani furono li primi et amazorono non so che donne, fanciulli, pur pochi, et usorono tante crudeltà, che hanno pieno lo stomacho ad ognuno, et in tanto male è pure questo bene, che grande et picholo hanno posto grandissimo odio a Franzesi' (P. D. Pasolini, *Caterina Sforza*, vol. iii, p. 217). Sigismondo dei Conti likewise declared that at the capture of Mordano 'Elvetii et Britones crudelitate barbarica victoriam exercentes nec pueris, nec mulieribus, nec aetate confectis pepercerint' (*Historiae sui Temporis*, vol. ii, p. 79; and cf. Sanuto, *La Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, pp. 95–6). 'Il nostro Gubernatore ne ha scripto più volte de le occurrentie di là,' wrote Caterina Sforza to the Forlivesi on the 19th November, 'et de li modi et portamenti sinestri usati verso voi da questi Franzosi. . . . Questi Franzosi, quantunque sieno nostri amici, essendo bestiali et senza lege come sonno, tali che non temeno patroni, nè altri superiori, li quali scio hanno grandissimo dispiacere de li disordini loro . . .' (Pasolini, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 347, and vol. iii, p. 224). Another writer begged that no one would venture 'domandare li danni che fanno, tagliare albori froctiferi e non froctiferi, salici piante e insiti [innesti] e viti. Desfacevano le case, brusavano, facevano el peggio che possevano' (*ibid.*, vol. i, p. 346 note).

Describing Charles VIII's coming to Tuscany, Jacopo Nardi, the historian of Florence, speaks of 'li mali e odiosi portamenti delle sui genti. . . . Tale era la insolenza e superchieria del suo esercito, che poco o nulla differenza faceva nel conversare da gli amici o nemici; sì ch' egli aveva spaventato tutti i popoli dall' essere più

a quello favorevoli: di modo che, si Dio per sua speziale grazia non l'avesse condotto (come pareva che si vedesse per lo effetto) al gastigo de' paesi nostri e di tutta Italia, non fu il suo governo di tal prudenza che ne fusse dovuto seguire così maraviglioso successo' (*Istorie della Città di Firenze*, vol. i, pp. 45–6).

'E a dì 5 di novembre 1494,' runs an entry in Landucci's Diary, 'certi mandatari del Re di Francia andavano per Firenze, e segnavano le case che più gli piacevano. Andavano in casa, e per tutte le camere, e segnavano, questa per tale signore, e questa per l'altro barone. E nota ch' elle non furono centinaia ma migliaia, in tanto che tutta la città fu occupata per ogni luogo; che quelle che non erono segnate, quando giunsono le giente dell' arme e la fanteria, occuporono in un tratto tutti e borghi e vie che trovavano drento dicendo: *apri qua*; e non curavano se era povero o ricco. Davano ad intendere di volere pagare: pochi furono che pagassino. E se pure pagava qualche cosa, pagava le corna e mangiavasi el bue. E fu ancora maggior cosa, che furono pochi che levassino le donne di casa, eccetto che le fanciulle, che furono mandate a' munisteri e a' loro parentadi, dove non era aloggiati. E in vero furono molto onesti, che non fu solo uno che parlassi una parola disonesta a femine. Avevano pure in secreto una grande paura' (Luca Landucci, *Diario Fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516*, ed. Iodoco del Badia, p. 72). Nevertheless, at Venice, as Commynes informed the Duke of Milan on 27th November, 'le bruit court par les gens de la ville que depuis que le roy est à Florence, qu'il leur a osté toute liberté et que ès maisons où nos gens sont logiés l'on fait des choses mal faictes touchant femmes' (Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Lettres et négociations de Philippe de Commines*, vol. ii, pp. 148–9).

'E a dì 29 detto [novembre 1494], sabato,' ran another entry of Landucci's, 'el resto del campo del Re ch' era in Romagna, passò di quà e venne da San Godenzo e a Dicomano e al Ponte a Sieve, e poi per Valdarno di sopra, facendo molto danno. E a Corella ammazzarono circa undici uomini e presono prigioni e posono taglie, guastando tutto 'l paese come fussi una fiamma di fuoco. E a me fu rotto el muro della casa, e rotto tutti e serrami, e entrato per forza al mio podere, e feciommi molto danno, e consumorommi vino e biada, e portoronne alcune masserizie ch' attagliavano loro; e quelli di Corella ch' egli ammazzarono, furono certi uomini vecchi, per accettargli, e non intesano l' uno l' altro. È ben vero che prima si feciono innanzi certi giovani per ributtargli, ma quei vecchi facendogli tirare indietro; e quei Franciosi bestiali dettono a quei vecchi su per la testa e lasciorongli morti pe' campi, e per tutto feciono crudeltà' (Landucci, *Diario*, pp. 88–9).

Something of the same sort must, it would seem, have occurred at Siena, since on the 29th November Charles VIII found it necessary to send an apology to the little Republic for 'certains excés et dommaiges faictz par nos gens de guerre en voz terres, comme l'en

dit', with promises of reparation and of the chastisement of the guilty (*Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iv, p. 122).

In Rome, Burchard tells us, 'Galli, ut suo modo hospitarentur, domos hinc et inde aperiebant et introibant, extra projicientes patronos, equos et alia, comburentes lignea, commedentes, bibentes que in ipsis erant absque alicujus rei solutione, ex quo surrexit magnus rumor in populo; unde ordinatum est et de mandato regis Francie per urbem publice proclamatum ne cui liceat domum vi intrare sub pena furce. . . . Feria quinta, 8 januarii, spoliata et depredata fuit per Gallos domus Pauli de Planca, civis Romani, interfecti duo filii sui et plures alii, ac Judei occisi, et eorum domus spoliate et depredate: similiter et domus domine Rose, matris Rmi. D. cardinalis Valentini [i. e. Vanozza dei Catanei, the mother of Cesare Borgia]. Feria sexta, 9 januarii, suspensi fuerunt quinque malefactores' (Burchard, *Diarium*, ed. L. Thuasne, vol. ii, pp. 218–20). Sigismondo dei Conti asserts that the Swiss, 'ubi se vino, cujus avidissimi sunt, ingurgitaverant, magnas turbas Romae ciebant, obviosque caedebant, quamquam jussu Regis legio una semper excubaret in armis, quae rapinas, caedesque prohiberet. Sed tam Galli, quam Elvetii omnibus Hispanis oppido erant infesti, cum quibus saepe digladiabantur' (*Historiae sui Temporis*, vol. ii, p. 87). 'Fecesi romore più d' una volta in tutta la città,' said Paolo Giovio, 'non potendo la plebe Romana di sua natura seditiosa et insolente, sopportare le parole minacciose e superbe d' accento de gli insolenti Francesi, nè i terribili volti de' Tedeschi. I soldati stranieri anch' eglino nelle taverne, e ne' chiassi fatti le più volte per molto vino più terribili, facevano per tutto quistione con coloro che incontravano; onde riscaldati per la ubbriachezza, e poco accorti la notte massimamente per li luoghi manco frequentati, erano ammazzati da sgherri et da ruffiani. Fu espugnata con grande impeto de gli Svizzeri, e de' Guasconi la casa de' Banchi, e in essa furono tagliati à pezzi certi plebei c' havevano ammazzato un soldato Francese, essendo anco ucciso Marco Maffei, il quale era gentil' huomo' (Paolo Giovio, *Istorie del suo Tempo*, Prima Parte, trans. L. Domenichi, vol. i, p. 55).

If this was true, or even partly true, of the conduct of the French in countries and places which were either friendly or neutral, some lively accounts might be expected when they should be established in conquered Naples.

On 13th April 1495 Marino Caracciolo wrote from the capital to tell the Marquis of Mantua how things were going on. 'Parame impossibile,' he said, 'che possano tenere questo reame actento li mali portamenti haveno facti et fano, el poco onnore che mostrano et non se resolveno ancora ad niente, tanto quanto lo primo dì che intraro in questa terra, dove ancora sono tucte le giente darme allozate et le fanterie fra questa terra et queste altre terre qui adtorno, che non se trova più un filo de strame, nè nellasscetamento

dele giente darme, nè deli populi, nè deli stati piglyano ordenacione nisuna et in nesuna cosa se resolveno, se non in stare solliciti allo robare, che non actendeno ad altro, in modo che ognj homo è stato fastidito, che vorriano più presto el turco, dal quale spereriano più humanità et più justicià. Qui se fanno quactro o cinco privilegj de una causa *pro et contra* et de tucti se strapagano et de ogni minima scriptura toglieno li cinquanta et cento ducati, et poi per un bisogno, et ben spesso strazano li privilegi et diceno non havere bene intesa la cosa, ma haveno bene inteso inpire la borsa, in modo che lè opinione qua che li secretarij habiano fine ad questa hora robato meglyo de trentamilia ducati. La Maiestà del re di franza è quello che manco faza et che manco daga audiencia, nè cerca la benivolencia de li populi, et lassa magnar questi lupi come vogliono. Et se alcuna lamentacione haven qualche volta, comanda che sia facta iusticia, ma non è hobedita. Monsignor de monpensier, duca de sessa, è quello che have meglio nome in la terra, et che manco se inpaza in queste robarie, et dice che quando sia solo al governo de questo reame che mantegnarrà iusticia et cognoscerrà li homini da ben. Haverria assai da dire de questi loro mali portamenti, ma lasso, per non esser più longo' (cited by Arturo Segre, 'I Prodromi della Ritirata di Carlo VIII', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series V, vol. xxxiv, pp. 363–4).

'Io ve aviso,' the Marquis was told in another letter, 'che questo reame la più parte ha mal contento per lj malj portamenti che se fa. Questa terra non par più Napoli. Eri mattina io me ritrovay dal S. conte vostro cugnato [Gilbert de Montpensier], quale ge ven circha a 15 gentilly homini de questa terra a supplicar Sua S. chel se provedesse ali manchamenti che se fasseva per questa terra et maxime in cassa di gentilli homini. E lui rispose chel ge provederia. Ma ben aviso vostra S. che lè cossa non possibile a proveder per esser el numero e lj genti assay e diversse' (cited by A. Segre, 'Lodovico Sforza e la Repubblica di Venezia', in *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Series III, vol. xx, p. 403).

Sanuto's account of the matter is as follows: '*Tamen* Napolitani subito comenzono a esser mal contenti de Franzesi: questo perchè erano li vassalli in le sue caxe, et Franzesi li patroni. Creteno [credettero] haver exemptione, et li capitoli a loro modo, et nulla ebbeno: *ymo* el Re vuolse scuoder avanti el tempo una gabella pagavano da Pasqua, come dirò di sotto. Li Zudei fonno scaciati, et messi a saco quelli pochi erano restati, da Franzesi; *licet* essendo edito dil Re non li fusse dato noja: ma non poteva obviar a la furia dì le sue zente. . . . Et cussi a tutti li soi conferiva de beneficii de ditto Reame. . . . Ma Napolitani comenzono a star mal contenti, non havendo potuto obtenir li privilegii volevano, *maxime* di una impositione a loro noiosa imposta per re Ferando vechio, che pagava *annuatim* al Re da Pasqua certa quantità, zoe tanto per fuogo. Et non *solum* el Re [non] li volse assolverli, ma quella voleva al presente,

dicendo havia de bisogno de danari per pagar le soe zente. Et a di 25 April erano assueti de pagar le doane di le piegore ducati 100 milia. Et el Re, havendo bisogno, chiamò queloro havevano tal cargi, dicendo si di presente a di 8 Marzo li volevano dar ducati 60 milia, li sparagnava el resto. Et Napolitani si scusavano non haveva da darli. . . . El Re voleva, oltra el dacio di le piegore, *etiam* una certa angaria, la qual per don Alphonso era sta avanti el tempo scossa, et però Napolitani non sapeva che farsi, et si doleva di la loro fortuna, volendo volentiera, potendo, ritornar sotto caxa di Aragona et non sotto Franza. El sussidio caritativo de uno ducato per fuogo el Re mandò a dimandar in l'Apruzo, Puia et Calavria, el qual, *ut mos est*, saria assà danari, da ducati 100 milia in suso . . .

'Napolitani pur erano mal contenti per le insolentie, però che stava ne le soe caxe, manzava et beveva, toleva et usava la roba loro come soa propria, et più che vergognava le donne, et tal, non volendo consentir, le amazavano; et alcune maridate, da poi consentitoli, per tuorli li anelli havevano in dito, li tagliava li diti, come da persone che ivi in questo tempo se ritrovava intesi: cosse intollerabele. Et non potendo quelli meschini più soportar, andono a dolersi al Re, el qual mostrò molto li dispiacessi tal violentie; ma pur a tanto exercito non havendo da darli dinari nè le sue page, mal poteva remediar: pur trovato alcuni giotoni, ne fece impiccar 6; la qual cossa fo assà de timor; benchè tal provision fusse tarde, et za Napolitani erano disperati, et contra Franzesi harebbono fatto ogni mal che havesse poduto . . .

'Franzesi [so it was reported by a Venetian merchant trading with Naples] erano zente poltronissima, sporca et dissoluta; prima sempre stano in pecai (?) et in atti venerei; le tavole sta sempie preparate, nè mai si cava mantili, nè si scova sotto; che intravano al principio in le caxe in Napoli, tolevano le miglior camere, et in la pezor mandava el patron di la caxa; andavano in caneva, toleva vini et formenti, et mandavano a vender in piaza; sforzavano le femene, non havendo alcun rispetto: poi le robavano et toleva li anelli di dedo [dito], et quella feva resistentia, li tagliavano li dedi per haver li anelli; stavano molto in chiesa a loro oratione. . . . El Re cavalcava per la terra hora con 100, hora con manco di xvi cavalli, senza servar alcun ordine nè decoro regio; che el Re era liberal, ma non havia danari, et li soi erano richi, vestiti di seda, etc.; . . . che Franzesi lievano assà vanie, et *conclusive* fevano pessima compagnia a Napolitani; et che vorebbeno Napolitani più presto esser sottoposti a ogni altra generatione che a questi; che non vi sono ivi porte nè fenestre, ma brusate per non comprar legne; li cittadini al meglio potevano si partivano de li, lassando la roba et la caxa in le man de Franzesi, et loro habitava in le ville; et che a le donne era sta usato gran violencie, prima usato con quelle contra il voler suo, de li mariti, padri et fratelli. *Et accidit* che uno barone franzese, intrato in caxa di uno cittadino che havia una bellissima fiola, et

volendo ivi far bona ciera et disnar, volse fusse presente la ditta figlia; et poi disse al padre che al tutto lui la voleva haver, promettendoli, etc. Et el povero padre rispose voleva dimandar a la moglie et a uno suo fiul. La qual per niente non volendo soportar tal inzuria, et non potendose defender in altro modo, el fiul disse: ordinate el venghi et dateli l' hora, et cussi fo ordinato. Et venne dito franzese, et andò in camera con lei, et avanti lui la tocasse, vi entrò ditto suo fratello, et amazò quel franzese et scapò via. El padre medemo andò con lagrime a notificar tal caxo al Re; el qual mostrò molto dispiacerli, et haver meritato la morte. Et disse: fate venir vostro fiul dentro qui, che li perdonarò. El qual venuto, a pena si butò a piedi dil Re, che da alcuni franzesi fo amazato; et el Re non fece altro. Le donne erano ne li monasterii; pur fo divulgato al [? el] Re cavò una munega di uno monasterio, Santa Chiara, et usò con lei, non li bastando la favorita di Malfi; et ancora molte altre che li era menate per soi Franzesi' (Sanuto, *La Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, pp. 245–6, 248–9, 261, 267, 344–5).

'Esso Re,' said another Venetian, 'era de' più lascivi uomini della Francia, e si dilettava molto del coito, e di mutare ancora pasto qualche volta, che quando avea usato con una, più di quella non si curava, dilettandosi molto di cose nuove, benchè in simili lussurie avea grandissima avvertenza di non toccare la moglie d' altri. *Tamen* molte volte ha usato ancora tirannia di prendere le vergini, e le altrui mogli, quando la bellezza il dilettava. E in Italia di simili vituperi ne usò infiniti. E ancora condusse seco in Francia alcune Damigelle rapite a Napoli e nell' Italia' (Priuli, *De Bello Gallico*, in Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. xxiv, col. 31).

'Doppo la partita di Carlo,' wrote Paolo Giovio, 'Napolitani, iquali naturalmente si rallegrano della novità de' Re, e della mutatione de gli stati, essendo loro oggimai venuti à noia i Francesi, un' altra volta piegarono gli animi à gli Aragonesi. Perche secondo che ciascuno haveva un bel cavallo in casa, i Francesi imperiosamente gliel toglievano, quasi che fosse stato tolto dalle stalle de gli Aragonesi; e di proprio volere allogiavano nelle case de' cittadini privati, pur ch' una volta sola i forrieri havessero segnato il nome del Francese sù le porte delle case; a' quali cittadini essi erano poi molto gravi et noiosi; perciò che questa natione colerica, et spesso insolente, et molto prodiga in provedere da vivere, cosi di suo come dell' altrui, travagliavano et lordavano ogni cosa in casa de' Napolitani, huomini parchi, et molto studiosi di politezza et di leggiadria. Et anco molti di loro avezzi alla corte del Re, mal volentieri potevano sopportare di vedere la città priva del Re, suo signore, et spogliata d'ogni suo antico honore; perciò che dapoi che Carlo, il quale larghissimamente spendendo haveva fatto ricco ogn' uno, et massimamente gli artefici, s'era partito di Napoli, pareva ch' eglino fossero per servire in perpetuo à più aspri governatori' (Paolo Giovio, *Istorie del suo Tempo*, Prima Parte, trans. L. Domenichi, vol. i, p. 104).

'Et finalmente,' said Matarazzo, 'auta la signoria de li detti reami, li Franciosi ogni cosa robbavano, e vituperavano donne; e si alcuno li avesse mostrato mal volto, subbito ammazzavano quelli Italiani; e gettavano vino; e quello che non potevano logorare, overo portare via, subbito lo abbrusciavano. Et le villanie e disonestà quante ne facessero, io non lo porria redire, nè accontare' (Matarazzo, *Cronaca della Città di Perugia*, ed. A. Fabretti, in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. xvi, part ii, p. 24).

Benedetti, the Venetian doctor who served at Fornovo, understood that the French in Naples 'saccheggiavano le case private; spogliavano le Chiese; e la crudel lussuria loro non risparmiava le sacre vergini. Le donne principali vergognate piangevano i vituperi usati nei corpi loro. A questo modo in parte alcuna non cessò la lussuria, e l'ubbriacchezza, e le rapine, le quali fecero odioso subito il nome di Francesi. Gran parte de gli habitatori havendo gia mutato openione, cominciarono a far voti per Ferdinando' (Alessandro Benedetti, *Il Fatto d'Arme del Taro*, trans. L. Domenichi, pp. 36–7; and cf. Bernardino Corio, *Storia di Milano*, ed. de Magri, vol. iii, p. 580).

'Vis, praedae, rapinae, etiam Carolo vetante, sunt,' wrote Peter Martyr (*Opus Epistolarum*, ed. of 1670, p. 83), 'quales a vagantibus Gallis solent expectari'; and Cagnola, an historian of Milan, believed the Neapolitans to be 'stomacati del governo e modo de Francesi, maxime de li desonesti loro termini che usaveno con le donne napolitane et in tirampnia a volere dinari' (Giovan Pietro Cagnola, 'Storia di Milano', in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Series I, vol. iii, p. 202).

A specially deep impression seems to have been made by the ferocity with which the French repressed the revolt of Gaeta in June 1495, when, as a Neapolitan diarist declared, 'li Franzesi gi fecero la maggior crudeltà che mai si facessero di morte e di sacco insino all' ecclesia non havendo nullo rispetto' (Giacomo Gallo, *Diurnalia*, ed. S. Volpicella, p. 14). After the revolt, according to the account given by Sanuto, 'intrò per la via di la marina in la terra monsignor di Beucher, el qual era rimaso gran siniscalco dil Regno, in Napoli habitava. Et ancora vi entrò el cardinal Colonna con zerca 3,000 persone in tutto, et con quelli Franzesi erano in rocca, et zentilhomeni ussiteno fuora contra el populo, el qual havia cridato: "Ferro! Ferro! Aragona! Aragona!" et di quelli Gaetani ne amazono numero 1,500 et più, che fu una crudelissima cossa veder in quella città tanti corpi morti per la terra, et *etiam* li puti; et le donne veramente non volsene amazar, ma le vechie fonno mandate a Napoli, et le zovene cargate et poste su certe galeaze per mandarle in Provenza; ma, *ita volente Deo*, poi da Zenoesi ditte galeaze fonno prese et le donne liberate; si che Gaeta a questo modo fo trattata, et fatto quel che *nunquam* più fo audito, che contra uno populo si usasse tanta crudeltà senza ragion' (Sanuto, *La Spedizione di Carlo VIII in Italia*, p. 440).

In a metrical commentary on the Lord's Prayer (cited by L. Thuasne, *Djem-Sultan*, pp. 448–51) the Italians were represented as praying in the following terms for delivery from the evils of the French invasion:

'Audi el suplicio de noi poveri Lombardi
Che de Franciosi, Gasconi et Picardi
Crudelmente siamo straciati
Dhe non guardar ali nostri peccati.

Quando elli vengnano nelle casse nostre,
Tanto pratossi et honesti se fano
Cho parono chon soi officij et per nostri:

Et poi che in cassa nostra sono intrati,
Paron leoni et orssi scatenati,
Biestemon come fano renegati.

Poi subito hominciano achridare
Daglia sa la clave del geanare,
Et quella de la capsa et del celare.

Fan poi de li nostri beni tal massario
Questa crudel et perfida genia,
Che in dei giorni se chomsumeria.

. . . . . .

Et non li basta anchora far tanti mali
Che occidano tutti gli nostri animali
Et dano, o Idio, in fine ali cavali.

. . . . . .

Quando habiamo caponi over gallina,
Sive vogliamo servar ala matina,
Chominciano gridar chon gron ruina;

Et quando nel celare sono intrati,
Et che ano gli vini ritrovati,
Gridan chome cani arabiati.

Pur se volesseno usar discrecione
Si chome fano li bone persone
Pagar te delibere beno chon ragione.

Et si habiamo moglia over doncelle,
Lj vogliano per se la piu bella,
Nel leto anchor vogliano dormir chon ella.'

In conclusion, I give the text of two somewhat significant admissions by Frenchmen who were in Italy with Charles VIII.

The first is the letter written by Gilbert Pointet at Asti on 15th July 1495, from which I have quoted above, p. 241. 'Il y a deux choses par trop,' he told his correspondent. 'C'est assavoir, il y a par trop de carriage comme de coffres et bahuz. Je croy qu'il y avoit de quinze à vingt mille somiers qui cuidèrent tout gaster.

Il y a d'aventuriers et vivandiers et de laronniers une autre grande infinité qui ne servent qu'à manger nos vivres, et à embler et robber par les maisons, et ne vallent riens à combattre, car je l'ay veu et aperceu. Ils nous donnent le bruyt et la renommée d'estre pillars et si vous voyiez les maulx qu'ilz ont faits et font vous en auriez horreur. Je croy qu'ilz sont de viii à x mille' (cited by J. de la Pilorgerie, *Campagne et Bulletins de la Grande Armée d'Italie commandée par Charles VIII*, pp. 359–60).

The second is from the *Mémoires* of Commynes. 'Par toute Ytalie [les peuples] ne desiroient que à se rebeller, si de costé du Roy les affaires eussent esté bien conduictz et en ordre et sans pillerie : mais tout se faisoit au contraire, dont j'ay eu grand deuil pour l'honneur et bonne renommée que pouvoit acquerir en ce voyage la nation de France, car le peuple les adouroit comme saincts, estimant en nous toute foy et bonté. Mais ce propos ne leur dura gueres, tant pour nostre desordre et pillerie, que aussi les ennemys preschoient le peuple en tous cartiers, nous chargeans de prendre femmes à force, et l'argent et aultres biens où nous les povions trouver. De plus grans cas ne nous povoient ilz charger en Ytalie, car ilz sont jaloux et avaricieux plus que les autres. Quant aux femmes, ilz mentoient, mais du demourant il en estoit quelque chose. . . .

'Et fut le Roy couronné, et estoit logé en Cappouanne, et quelquefoix alloit au Mont Imperial. Aux subjectz fist de grans graces et leur rabbatit de leurs charges ; et croy bien que les peuples d'eulx ne fussent point tournez (combien que c'est peuple muable) qui eust contenté quelque poy de nobles, mais ilz n'estoient recueilliz de nul, et [fut] faict des rudesses aux portes. Et les myeulx traictez furent ceulx de la maison de Caraffe, vrais Arragonois : encores leur osta l'on quelque chose ; ainsi ne fut laissé office ne estat, mais pis traictez les Engevins que les Arragonois, tieulx le conte Marilanno. Fut donné ung mandement, dont on chargea le president de Ganay d'avoir prins argent, et le seneschal, faict de nouveau duc de Noble et grand chambelan du royaulme. Par ce mandement fut maintenu chascun en sa possession, et forclox les Engevins de retourner au leur, sinon par procès : et ceulx qui y estoient entrez d'eulx mesmes, comme le conte de Selanno, on baillioit la main forte pour les en gecter. Tous offices et estatz furent donnés aux Francoys et à deux et à trois. Tous les vivres qui estoient au chasteau de Napples quant il fut pris, qui estoient fort grans, dont le Roy eut congnoissance, il les donna à ceulx qui les demandoient. . . . Et par ceste conclusion se peult veoir que ceulx qui avoient conduict ceste grande œuvre ne l'avoient point faict d'eulx, mais fut vray euvre de Dieu, comme chascun le veoit ; mais ces grans faultes que je diz estoient euvres d'hommes aveuglez de gloire, qui ne congnoissoient point dont ce bien et honneur leur venoit et y procederent selon leur nature et experiance' (Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. B. de Mandrot, vol. ii, pp. 150, 199–201).

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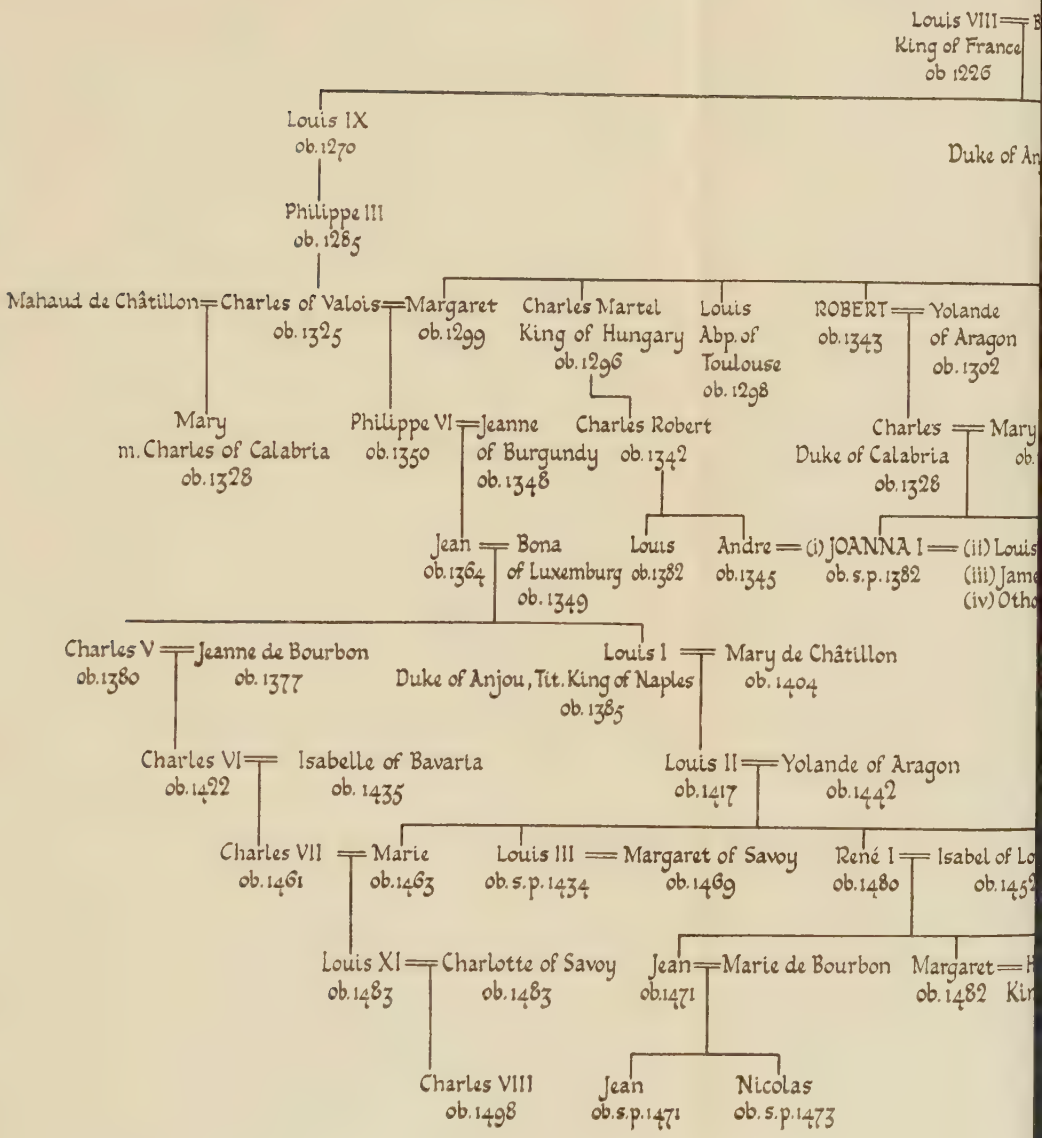
The KINGS


Louis VIII
King of France
ob 1226
Louis IX
ob.1270
Philippe III
ob.1285
Duke of An
Mahaud de Châtillon
Charles of Valois
ob. 1325
Margaret
ob.1299
Charles Martel
King of Hungary
ob.1296
Louis
Abp. of
Toulouse
ob. 1298
ROBERT
ob.1343
Yolande
of Aragon
ob.1302
Mary
m. Charles of Calabria
ob.1328
Philippe VI
ob.1350
Jeanne
of Burgundy
ob.1348
Charles Robert
ob.1342
Charles
Duke of Calabria
ob.1328
Mary
ob.
Jean
ob.1364
Bona
of Luxemburg
ob.1349
Louis
ob.1382
Andre
ob.1345
(i) JOANNA I
ob. s.p.1382
(ii) Louis
(iii) Jame
(iv) Otho
Charles V
ob.1380
Jeanne de Bourbon
ob. 1377
Louis I
Duke of Anjou, Tit. King of Naples
ob. 1385
Mary de Châtillon
ob. 1404
Charles VI
ob.1422
Isabelle of Bavaria
ob. 1435
Louis II
ob.1417
Yolande of Aragon
ob.1442
Charles VII
ob.1461
Marie
ob.1463
Louis III
ob. s.p.1434
Margaret of Savoy
ob.1469
René I
ob.1480
Isabel of Lo
ob.145
Louis XI
ob.1483
Charlotte of Savoy
ob.1483
Jean
ob.1471
Marie de Bourbon
Margaret
ob.1482
Kin
Charles VIII
ob.1498
Jean
ob. s.p.1471
Nicolas
ob. s.p.1473

f NAPLES

nche of Castile
ob 1252

CHARLES I, King of Naples, ob. 1285 = Beatrice of Provence ob. 1267

CHARLES II ob. 1309 = Mary of Hungary ob. 1323

Philippe, Prince of Taranto ob. 1332 = Catherine of Valois ob. 1346

Jean, Duke of Durazzo ob. 1335 = Agnes of Périgord

Blanche ob. 1310 = James II of Aragon ob. 1327

Valois 28

Louis ob. 1362

Philippe ob. 1368

Charles ob. 1348

Alfonso IV

f Taranto
of Majorca
f Brunswick

Marie ob. 1366 = Louis ob. 1376

Peter IV

CHARLES III ob. 1387

Eleanor

LADISLAS ob. s.p. 1414

William of Austria = (I) JOANNA II Jacques de la Marche = (II) ob. s.p. 1435

Ferdinand I

raine

Charles, Count of Maine ob. 1473 = Isabel of Luxemburg

ALFONSO I ob. 1458

John II

nry VI of England

Yolande ob. 1483 = Ferri of Lorraine, Count of Vaudemont ob. 1470

FERRANTE (Ferdinand I) ob. 1494 = Isabella of Clermont

Ferdinand the Catholic

René II ob. 1508

Jeanne ob. 1481 = Charles IV ob. s.p. 1481

ALFONSO II abdicated 1495 = Ippolita Sforza

FEDERIGO deposed 1501

FERRANTINO (Ferdinand II) ob. 1496

Isabella = Gian Galeazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan

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